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THE REVOLUTION IN IRELAND
1906-1923

Commander R. C. Carew, R.N.,
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO
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THE REVOLUTION IN IRELAND 1906-1923

BY

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BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS

1923

Made in Great Britain

PREFACE

THE nucleus of the present volume is formed by the article on the recent political history of Ireland contributed by me to the new volumes of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' (twelfth edition), which I have been permitted to use by the courtesy of the proprietors. By far the greater part of that article was finished before the opening of the negotiations which ended in the setting up of the Irish Free State, and was therefore written under the impression of events of which the outcome was not yet apparent. In revising this portion of my work, however, I found very little that needed modification in the light of what has since happened. The alterations made for the purposes of this book have been mainly in arrangement and in certain details. I have, however, expanded some sections, notably the account of the origins and objects of Sinn Fein and that of the part played by the United States. The last three chapters, which continue the story down to the coming into force of the Free State Constitution, are wholly new. The last chapter, which deals with the period of anarchy following the British withdrawal, aims rather at giving a general impression than a narrative in historical sequence; for even an abbreviated history of that crowded and terrible year would easily fill a volume. Lastly, I have added an introduction for the benefit of those who are ignorant of Irish history. This introduction does not pretend to be a history of Ireland, even in outline. Its object is to bring into relief the main factors which have determined the character of the Irish people and created the problems by which their rulers were and still are faced.

The task of writing the history of these confused and troubled years has been the most ungrateful and the most difficult that I have ever undertaken. For the purposes of the 'Encyclopædia' it was necessary that the narrative should be objective—a judicial summing up,

as it were, of the evidence available. But it is not easy to keep a detached mind amid the turmoil of revolution ; and anyone who should succeed in doing so would be less than human. For myself the most that I can claim is that I set out to write history, not propaganda ; to find out the truth, if possible, and tell it : and, while reserving the right to criticise and judge the actions of those with whom I disagreed, to state their case as fully and as fairly as possible. My readers must decide how far I have succeeded.

To assist their judgment, it may be well that they should know something of my equipment for this task, and the standpoint from which I approached it. When in the autumn of 1914 I first took up my duties in Dublin University I was very ignorant of the merits of the Irish Question, and quite without any preconceived views as to its solution. I had never belonged to any political party or taken any active part in politics. The Union, with its ideal of diversity in unity, had indeed appealed to me ; but I upheld it without fanaticism, and when I came to Ireland I was quite prepared to live under, and work for, whatever Government the Irish people chose to set up. That remains my position. Residence in Ireland, however, modified my attitude toward the question of the Union. Mixing as I did with people of very various views, I had peculiar opportunities for studying the problems of the country at close quarters. It was about a year before I felt that I was beginning to understand them ; for truth in Ireland lives in a very deep well, and is difficult to draw out even with much patience and labour. The increasing understanding had what to some may seem the surprising effect of convincing me of the necessity of the Union from the purely Irish point of view. As for my old ideal, it astonished me to hear my Irish Nationalist friends talking of the Union as a domination, and of themselves as a subject people ; for such an idea had never entered my head, and I knew that it was entirely absent from the minds of Englishmen, who had long since learned to look upon the Irish, with the Scots and Welsh, as coequal members of a common body politic. But if this revelation cut some of the ground from under the Union as a symbol of reconciliation and unity, there

were other revelations which led me to the conviction that the Union, in spite of the remediable defects of its machinery, alone stood between Ireland and a sea of troubles. I need not enlarge here on the reasons for this conviction; they are set forth in the following pages. But one consideration I may mention. With the perception of the deep traditional cleavages in Irish life, with its bitter racial and religious antagonisms, came the conviction that it was only the fact that Ireland was embraced in a wider unity that kept her united, and that, left to herself, she would become a prey to cruel civil strife and ultimately suffer disruption. This has proved to be the case.

It gives me no satisfaction that the fate of my adopted country, to which I am bound by so many ties of affection and gratitude, has been what I expected in the circumstances which I feared. The ideal of the Union has gone for ever. The partition of Ireland is an accomplished fact. The Free State is still at war within itself. Ireland, a nation at last, starts on her new life sadly crippled and handicapped. That she will ultimately emerge from her long agony prosperous and happy is the prayer of all men of good will. I am told, however, that all interest in her fate has died out both in Great Britain and in the United States, and that no one will now trouble to read anything that is written about her. It may be so; but that is no reason for keeping silence. The British people, who are at bottom neither ungenerous nor cowardly, will some day awake to the fact that it was the cowardly and ungenerous policy of their Government, culminating in the great surrender, which has been largely responsible for the woes of Ireland, and that they cannot rid themselves of a share in this responsibility by shutting their eyes and ears. The American people, whose sense of their own exceptional righteousness is apt to lead them into blundering interference in the concerns of other nations, have also their share of responsibility. It is hardly for them to affect indifference to the misfortunes which their ill-informed clamour helped to create. In any case, the revolution in Ireland is not in its nature local or isolated. It is but part of the revolution which has been in progress to a greater or less degree everywhere, and the lessons it teaches are of universal application.

That is one reason why this book bears the title, not of 'The Irish Revolution,' but of 'The Revolution in Ireland.'

With regard to the sources on which I have relied, for the most part these are sufficiently indicated in foot-notes to the text. Of the vast mass of literature on the Irish Question published during the period covered by this work very little has any independent critical value. The numerous books or pamphlets written on one or other of its aspects are for the most part useful only as reflecting particular points of view. Subject to this last limitation, it may be said that the Sinn Fein propaganda works are almost entirely useless for the purposes of scientific history, and must be used with extreme caution. The Government publications are valuable as sources, in so far as they either reprint original documents or, as in the case of the Royal Commission Report on the Irish Rebellion, provide evidence of first-hand witnesses under cross-examination. These publications, however, cover a very small field.

By the courtesy of the Chief Secretary I was allowed access for a short period in 1921 to the unpublished documents under his charge, without conditions or censorship of any kind. I was thus enabled to study, among other things, the confidential reports submitted annually by the County Inspectors of the R.I.C., covering a period of ten years. These reports—which are referred to in the text as *Confidential Intelligence Notes*—vary of course very much in merit, but as a whole they proved of exceptional value for the light they throw on the general conditions of the country and of the shifting phases of popular sentiment in the several counties. These reports are printed, together with statistics of crime and other matters with which the police were concerned. In addition to these, the enormous number of unprinted reports, *dossiers* of the depositions of witnesses in special cases, recommendations of particular policies by the police and military authorities, with the departmental comments upon them, were freely placed at my disposal for the elucidation of particular points. Since I was pressed for time, I was unable to make as full use of these materials as I should have liked, which is perhaps the more to be regretted as a great mass of them were, I understand, destroyed before the surrender of the Castle to the Provisional Government.

Of great value, especially as affording some check upon the official records, are the Sinn Fein official publications, especially *Sinn Fein* and, later, the *Irish Bulletin*. As a record of Sinn Fein policy and activities they are indispensable, but, as propagandist publications, they must of course be used with great caution. As regards the Irish Press it may be said generally that the local newspapers are in some ways more valuable as historical material than those published in Dublin. At the Castle I was able to read a large number of these papers from all parts of the country. Their special value I found to lie not in their political complexion, save in so far as this reflected that of the local terror dominant at the moment, but in the more intimate light they threw on the life of the people.

Of other publications referred to in the text, *Notes from Ireland* needs some comment. This was published monthly, and later every quarter, by the Irish Unionist Alliance. Its intention is, therefore, to put forward the Unionist case. Subject to this caution, its volumes provide an invaluable supply of historical material. It gives a whole series of quotations from speeches and from the Press of all political complexions, which may be relied on as accurate; it also provides in its 'Diurnal' a very full chronological record of events. For this record the weekly editions of the more important Irish newspapers, e.g. the *Irish Times*, may also be referred to. These also publish many important documents. A complete collection of all published materials for the recent history of Ireland is preserved in the National Library at Dublin.

W. ALISON PHILLIPS.

LONDON, 1 July 1923.

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THE REVOLUTION IN IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

I.—IRELAND BEFORE THE UNION

IN the year 1904, when Arthur Griffith first put forward his programme for the overthrow of British rule in Ireland, the Sinn Fein organisation, of which he was the founder and inspirer, consisted of a handful of young teachers, poets and journalists, scarce known outside their own circle and utterly without political influence; and so they remained for twelve years longer. In 1921 these same men had made themselves the *de facto* rulers of the greater part of Ireland, had worn down the resistance of the British Government and people, and were in a position to dictate terms to the Ministers of a Power which had just been victorious in a great war. History records no more amazing overturn.

The story of this achievement, which forms the main theme of this book, has an interest out of all proportion to its intrinsic importance as compared with that of the world-shattering events which accompanied it, and to which it was in large measure due. It throws a strong if somewhat lurid light on a host of questions which have agitated the world since the end of the Great War: large questions of political principle, involving the very foundations of all government; ethical questions concerned with government in detail; questions, outside morality, involving only a difference of opinion as to counsels of expediency; and, above all perhaps, the insistent practical question of how to rule an empire through a democratic

parliament under the party system. In all these matters the recent history of Ireland may serve, certainly not as an example, but as a warning. It is a tragic history—as nearly all Irish history has been ; and the tragedy lies not so much in the bloodshed and terror of these years as in the ignorances, the misconceptions, the want of clear guiding principle, which made the terror and the bloodshed inevitable. It lies, in short, in the bankruptcy of British statesmanship. For Great Britain the culmination of the tragedy came with the public confession that this Imperial people, renowned and envied for their capacity to establish and maintain peace over a fifth of the earth's surface, were unable to maintain peace and order in their own household. For Young Ireland it came when, victorious and disillusioned, it saw too late that the hard realities of life are more solid than the visions of idealists.

For the purposes of this book the recent history of Ireland opens with the year 1906, for reasons which will be explained. In order to understand the forces at work during this period, however—the interplay of opinions and passions in Ireland which to the outside world are so puzzling—it is necessary to know something of the elements out of which Irish life and the Irish character have been formed. The physical elements are geographical position, climate, and soil ; the human elements are race, religion, and history.

Ireland stands as the outpost of Europe on the very edge of the 'continental shelf.' It is a large island, close to a much larger island which lies between it and the European continent, from which it is thus cut off by a double barrier of sea. The insularity of its outlook is therefore more marked even than that of Britain. Its physical conformation is that of a central plain surrounded on all sides by isolated groups of mountains, and it is this that determines its climate, which is softer and more uniform than that of Great Britain. For there is no continuous mountain range to break the passage of the prevailing W.S.W. winds, which carry in vast cloud masses from the Atlantic, and make Ireland a land of clinging mists and brilliant verdure. The dampness and uncertainty of the climate, however, while producing magnificent pasture, make the growing of cereal crops a precarious

undertaking over large parts of the island ; only the east central regions are really favourable for raising wheat, and the country as a whole seems as though predestined by nature to be one vast grazing ground. From time immemorial its main wealth has consisted in cattle, and it is significant that the theme of the oldest of Irish epics, the *Táin Bó Cualnge*, is a cattle-raid carried out by the Great Four-Fifths of Erin against Ulster. Among the many problems of Irish life the most persistent is that presented by a redundant population pressing on the margin of subsistence in a small country of which the greater part is better suited for pasture than for tillage.

Sir William Temple, and after him Montesquieu, both ascribe to climate the chief influence in determining the character of peoples and, therefore, their institutions. 'This may be the cause,' says Temple, 'that the same countries have generally in all times been used to forms of government much of a sort ; the same nature ever continuing under the same climate, and making returns into its old channel, though sometimes led out of it by persuasion, and sometimes beaten out by force.' At first sight this seems in a special degree true of Ireland. The Irish climate is enervating by reason of its softness, irritating by reason of its extreme variableness, and some maintain that it is this that has determined the Irish character, which is at once easy-going and excitable, quick of apprehension and seemingly incapable of any long-continued constructive effort. Few of those who come to Ireland for the first time from a more bracing air will deny the enervating effect of its atmosphere. Yet the fact remains that wherever men of English or Scottish race have settled in Ireland in self-contained groups, unmixed with the native Gaelic stock, they have for centuries retained, almost unchanged, the salient characteristics of their race. If, then, the nature of the Irish people as a whole has always tended to return to the old channel, though sometimes led out of it by persuasion, and sometimes beaten out by force, this must be ascribed to other influences than climate. These influences have been the peculiar qualities of the race, and the misfortune of its history.

Happy is the country that has no history. It is the

boast of the Irish that Ireland has a history older than that of any other western land ; that its records go back to the days when Rome still held sway in Britain, while its legends carry the story yet further back into the dim ages before ever Rome was. It is the plaint of the Irish Gaels that Ireland has of all the western nations been the most unhappy.

As to the unhappiness all will agree ; opinions differ only as to its root cause. Even as to this, indeed, there is a certain measure of agreement. It is common opinion that, if Ireland has always been distracted and miserable, this has been because she has never been governed on any principle consistently applied ; she has never been wholly left to herself, or wholly conquered. Opinions, of course, differ as to which of these processes would have been most beneficial. Young Ireland asserts, with fervent conviction, that in the dark ages which followed the downfall of Rome Irish culture alone survived as the beacon light of a new progress ; that Irish institutions gave promise of a social and political order superior to any now existing ; and that, but for the ruinous intrusion of alien forces, Ireland, instead of being a by-word among the nations, would have been a model for them to imitate. The contention is worth examining ; for, though it be wholly a matter of speculation, its effects in determining the ideal aims of Irish nationalism have been, and still are, very great.

There are weighty authorities to support the opinion that the Celtic race is, by virtue of its inherent qualities, incapable of developing unaided a high type of civilisation. Mommsen puts the matter most clearly ; and, though he may be suspected of a Germanic bias, the passage in which he does so is too well grounded to be treated as idle talk.

The Celtic, Galatian or Gallic nation [he says] received from the common Mother endowments other than those of its Italic, Germanic and Hellenic sisters. . . . Though possessing many good, and yet more brilliant, qualities, it is lacking in those moral and political capacities upon which all that is good and great in human affairs is built up. . . . Their civil constitution is imperfect. Not only is national unity represented only by a weak bond, which is equally true at the outset of all nations, but the individual communities lack cohesion and firm

government, a serious civil sense, and any consistent aim. The only organisation to which they are suited is the military, in which the bands of discipline relieve the individual of the heavy task of controlling himself. 'The salient characteristics of the Celtic Race,' says their historian Thierry, 'are personal bravery, in which they excel all peoples; an uncurbed, impetuous temper open to every impression; much intelligence, but combined with extreme volatility; want of perseverance, impatience of order and discipline, boastfulness and quarrelsomeness, the outcome of boundless vanity.' The elder Cato said much the same thing in fewer words: 'Two things the Gauls pursue with the greatest industry: fighting and wordy argument.'¹ These qualities of good soldiers and bad citizens explain the historic fact that the Celts have convulsed all States and founded none.²

What is true of the Gauls is certainly also true of the Gaels. They alone of all the races that invaded Ireland so completely conquered it as to absorb and render almost indistinguishable the more primitive peoples they found there. Yet in all the long centuries of their uninterrupted rule they never succeeded in securing unity and founding a nation. They brought with them their tribal organisation and established it in Ireland on the basis of a dominant aristocracy; and so it remained to the end. The political history of Celtic Ireland is one of never ceasing feuds and fighting; the glory of the Gaels was in war, which they carried at times into Britain, and if their legends have any basis of fact, even on to the continent of Europe. Now and again one of the rival chieftains would establish a sort of over-lordship, style himself High King (*ard-righ*), and even, as in the case of the O'Neills, found a dynasty; but none ever succeeded in creating a really national kingship. Allegiance was still primarily to the clan; the power of the high king was based on the strength of his own sept, and his authority over the others was expressed mainly in the levying of tribute and the holding of hostages for their good behaviour. Only one of the Irish chiefs, Brian Boromhe, ever came near to being supreme king in more than name; but when he perished, at Clontarf in the hour of victory, his work perished with him, and Ireland

¹ 'Pleraque Gallia duas res industriosissime prosequitur: rem militarem et argute loqui.'—Cato, *Orig.* l. ii, fr. 2 (Jordan).

² *Geschichte Roms*, i. 325.

relapsed into the tribal anarchy which made easy the conquest by the Normans.

It is idle to suggest, as the fashion has been of late in Ireland, that the Irish tribal system was peculiar to the country. All the now cultured races of Europe have passed through a similar stage of development ; and there is, especially, a close similarity between the tribal organisation of the primitive Irish and that of the primitive Teutons, from whom indeed, when they first came into the light of history, they were not widely separated in race.¹ In the case of other European nations it is admitted that their civilisation began when their tribal organisation was broken up. Sometimes it was broken up by violence from without, sometimes by deliberate policy from within. Rome destroyed the tribalism of Gaul, and made France possible ; Stephen of Hungary substituted the feudal system for the tribalism of the Magyars, and is revered as the patron saint of the nation he created. Irish tribalism survived both external influence and external force. So strong was it, that it did not even yield to the unifying spirit of the Church. In England the foundations of national unity were laid when, within a century of St. Augustine's landing, Archbishop Theodore organised the Church into provinces and dioceses. It was not until some six hundred years after the mission of St. Patrick that Archbishop Malachy did the same thing for Ireland. Hitherto the Irish Church had adapted itself to the tribal organisation ; and, though within the shelter of its monastery walls there grew up a learning and an art which spread their influence over half Europe, it did nothing for the essential civilisation of Ireland by the creation of a civic and national spirit. Ireland, left to herself, was a welter of confusion before ever, at the beginning of the ninth century, she began to be a prey to foreign invaders.

Other peoples have found political salvation as the result of foreign conquest. The Celtic tribes of Gaul fell under the discipline of Rome and, when that failed, were welded into new national forms by the hammer-blows of Teutonic invaders. The Norman conquest of England, ruthlessly and thoroughly carried out, was the

¹ See Eugene O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, vol. i. Introduction.

true beginning of the English nation. It was Norse sea-rovers, penetrating the eastern plains of Europe along the great water-ways and subduing and knitting together the Slavonic tribes, who laid the foundations of the Russian nation. No such discipline from without ever welded Ireland into unity. The Roman legions never passed the Irish Sea. The Norsemen came, but not to conquer. As pirates, they destroyed whatever rudimentary culture had survived in the monasteries amid the tribal anarchy; as settlers, they established themselves in isolated groups, building at the mouths of the great rivers the fortified trading posts which later grew into cities. They harried and wasted all Ireland, but their one united effort to bring the whole country under their domination broke down ignominiously. It was a story often to be repeated with variations in later times. The mail-clad Norsemen easily defeated the light-armed Gaels in battle; but their victories had no decisive result, since there were no cities to occupy and the beaten tribesmen merely scattered into the mountains, forests, and bogs, to reassemble in the rear of the invaders and worry them till they gave up the enterprise in disgust. But the Gaels were equally unable to expel the Norse from their walled towns; and there to the last they remained as another disturbing element added to the general confusion.

The Norman conquest, four centuries after the first incursions of the Norsemen, differed in character, but not in its general outcome. The conquest was more systematic, but it fell far short of completeness. The great barons, to whom the distant king delegated his authority, dominated the plains and the wide valley bottoms from their strong castles; but in the forest-clad hills the Gaelic chieftains and their wild tribesmen held their own. Presently they were to conquer their conquerors by a process of peaceful penetration. The Normans in England, when once their intimate ties with Normandy were severed, became English. The Normans in Ireland, cut off from intercourse with England and connected with the native chiefs by ties of marriage or fosterage, became Irish. Two hundred years after Strongbow's invasion the only result of the 'conquest,' so far as Ireland generally was concerned, was that feudal had been added to tribal

anarchy. Those of the 'colonists' who remained consciously English were reduced to a disheartened handful and, outside the walled towns, the authority of the Crown was confined to a strip of country thirty miles long by twenty broad between Dalkey and Dundalk, which was known as the English Pale. Certainly there had been no complete conquest. It might have been completed by Edward III when the Irish, weary of the outlawry which was the expedient of a feeble government to save the English element from extinction, petitioned to be put under English law. But the chivalrous founder of the Order of the Garter preferred to chase a shadowy crown abroad, and the army which might have brought permanent peace and order to Ireland carried instead untold ruin and desolation into France.

The preoccupation of the Crown with the Hundred Years' War and, when that at last was ended, with the Wars of the Roses left neither time nor opportunity for any effective assertion of its authority in Ireland. The agents of this authority, confined within the narrow limits of the Pale, and ill supported from the centre, became as oppressive to the 'colonists' as to the natives; and presently 'the King's English rebels' were added to 'the King's Irish rebels' and 'the King's Irish enemies.' Instead of the Irish seeking the protection of the English law, the English were fleeing over the border to escape the exactions of the royal courts, and were adopting the language, manners, and dress of the tribesmen. When at last Henry VIII, undisputed king in England, turned his attention to Ireland, the condition of the country presented a problem that might well have daunted an even more virile spirit.

This condition is described in a report on 'the State of Ireland and the Plan of its Reformation' which stands first in the collection of Irish State Papers of the reign of Henry VIII. It is too long to quote in full, but its essential part is best given in its own vivid language.

Who list make surmise unto the King for the reformation of his Land of Ireland, it is necessary to show him the estate of all the noble folks of the same, as well of the King's subjects and English rebels, as of Irish enemies. And first of all to make His Grace understand that there were more than 60

counties, called Regions, in Ireland, inhabited with the King's Irish enemies ; some regions as big as a shire, some more, some less, unto a little ; some as big as half a shire, and some a little less ; where reigneth more than 60 chief captains, whereof some calleth themselves Kings, some King's peers in their language, some Princes, some Dukes, some Archdukes, that liveth only by the sword, and obeyeth unto no other temporal person, but only to himself that is strong ; and every of the said captains maketh war and peace for himself, and holdeth by the sword and hath imperial jurisdiction within his room, and obeyeth to no other person, English or Irish, except only to such persons as may subdue him by the sword—also the son of any of the said captains shall not succeed to his father, without he be the strongest of all his nation ; for there shall be none chief captain in any of the said regions by lawful succession, but by fort mayne and election ; and he that hath strongest army and hardiest sword among them, hath best right and title ; and by reason thereof there be but few of the regions that be at peace within themselves, but commonly rebelleth against their chief captain. Also in every of the said regions there be diverse petty captains, and every of them maketh war and peace for himself, without licence of the chief captain.

Also there be 30 great captains of the English folk, that followeth the same Irish order and keepeth the same rule, and every of them maketh war and peace for himself without any licence of the King or any other temporal person, save that to him that is strongest, and of such that may subdue them with the sword. . . . There is no land in the world of so long continued war within himself, ne of so great shedding of Christian blood, ne of so great robbing, spoiling, praying, and burning, ne of so great wrongful extortion continually as Ireland.

‘Such,’ comments Richey,¹ ‘was the condition of Ireland after three centuries of English so-called government.’ The comment is historically unsound ; for hitherto there had been, strictly speaking, no English government in Ireland. The report just quoted uses the word ‘English’ in a large sense, and incidentally exaggerates the facts when it says that the King ‘did conquer all the land unto little, and did inhabit the same with English folk, subject to his laws, after the manner of England, and so the land did continue and prosper 100 years and more.’ For it was not the English, but the foreign conquerors of England who passed on to the conquest of

¹ A. G. Richey, *Lectures on Irish History* (1869–70).

Ireland and colonised it. By the time the new England had become conscious of itself, through the fusion of conquerors and conquered, Ireland was utterly out of hand, and the English Pale, in which alone the King's writ ran, was no more than a fragment of feudal England placed on the other side of the Irish Channel.¹ Even here the absence of the King gave free play to the anarchical instincts of an uncontrolled aristocracy, while everywhere else there was nothing to prevent the natural effects of 'the jealousy, hatred, cupidity and vanity which characterise the tribal state of political society.'²

It was Henry VIII who first seriously tried to make English government in Ireland a reality. He proclaimed himself King of Ireland, and the title was acknowledged not only by the Parliament of the Pale, but by all the Irish chieftains. The sharp distinction between Irishry and Englishry, established in 1366 by the Statute of Kilkenny, was done away with, and the policy was started of civilising the Irish by a process of assimilation. In the case of Wales the policy succeeded; in Ireland it failed. The reasons of the failure were various. Henry VIII himself, like his predecessors, turned from the settlement of Ireland to costly adventures abroad, and so the Irish services were starved. His ecclesiastical policy, too, was destined to introduce a new and most fateful element of discord into the unhappy land, where religious antagonisms were soon to reinforce those due to differences of race and culture. Moreover, the tribal instinct was too deeply rooted in the Gaels to be destroyed by half-measures. Henry did a politic thing when he resumed the lands of the absentee lords who performed no duties; for absenteeism had long been one of the curses of Ireland, as it was to be again. Less wise, perhaps, was the policy of superimposing the feudal system on that of the clan, by investing the great Irish chiefs with the style and the powers of earls; for this involved in English eyes a revolution in the system of land tenure which was pregnant with trouble. Certainly, whatever its immediate good effect, this was short-lived. The great chiefs had, after as before, little stomach for

¹ Goldwin Smith, *Irish History and Irish Character* (1861).

² Quiggin, 'Ireland: Early History,' in *Enc. Brit.* 11th ed.

dependence. Under Elizabeth they revolted one by one, and one by one were overthrown ; but when, just before her death, the last of them, the Earl of Tyrone, submitted she was queen in Ireland only over ' a waste of blood and ashes.'

Yet the Tudor rule in Ireland had been no mere unenlightened tyranny. Elizabeth founded Trinity College in Dublin, which was to be the nursing mother of so many great Irishmen. Orders were issued for the restoration of the churches ruined in the civil strife ; and, more remarkable still, for the setting-up of free schools in every parish. Unhappily, most of these plans for the amelioration and civilisation of the country were hampered, or altogether stopped, by the poverty or the parsimony of the Crown, which found it in the end easier and more profitable to reinforce its authority by 'planting' the confiscated estates of the great rebel chiefs with English colonists. The approved policy was to mix these colonists with the native population, so as to break up the tribal system. The ultimate result was that, though clan cohesion was destroyed, the new settlers became as Irish as the rest. The opportunity offered by the introduction of the reformed religion for a new method of unification was, moreover, missed. The religious attitude of the people in Ireland had from old time been determined by race. So long as Roman Catholicism was the creed of the Pale, the Church beyond the Pale cared not a rap for Rome. When Protestantism became the religion of the dominant English, the Gaels returned with fervour to the threshold of the Apostles. This may have been unavoidable in any case ; but the Government did nothing to avoid it. Intent on the policy of assimilation, the Crown sought, not to convert the Irish to the evangelical faith, but to impose upon them the Anglican model. The services were to be conducted and the Bible read in English and, where this was not understood by the people, in Latin. Had this imaginative and quick-witted people been taught the 'new religion' in their own tongue, the whole history of the country might have been changed ; for at the time of the Reformation Catholicism in Ireland was to all intents and purposes dead ; 'for is no archbishop, ne bishop, abbot, ne prior, parson, ne vicar, ne

any other person of the Church high or low, great or small, English or Irish, that useth to preach the word of God, saving the poor friars beggars.' As it was, the zealous missionaries of the Company of Jesus found in the waste spaces of Gaelic Ireland a rich recruiting ground for the forces which Rome was marshalling against Protestant England.¹

This mobilisation of the forces of Irish discontent in the interests of the Catholic Powers opposed to Great Britain was the most important of all the factors which henceforth determined the history of the country. In the days of Spanish predominance, and later of that of France, the internal condition of Ireland ceased to be a matter of merely domestic concern, and became one of world politics. The powers hostile to Great Britain were swift to discover her most vulnerable spot and hastened to attack it, with the whole weight of the spiritual authority of Rome behind them. To combat Roman Catholicism in Ireland, then, seemed to the Government of England the most obvious counsel of political common sense; and so the war of races and of cultures developed into a war of religions, with dreadful consequences which are by no means yet exhausted. In Ireland, as elsewhere, the armed conflict of the creeds raged most violently in the seventeenth century, and was embittered on the side of the Irish by a fresh catalogue of material wrongs. The policy of colonisation was carried on by James I on a larger scale and a more systematic plan; the 'flight of the earls,' and the confiscation of their lands, made possible the 'plantation' of Ulster, which resulted in the establishment in the north-eastern counties of a solid block of Protestant Englishmen and Scotsmen who, settling as they did with their wives and families, have never been absorbed into the Gaelic population, as was mostly the case with the more isolated colonists elsewhere. Under the same monarch, moreover, a judgment of the Court of King's Bench, which was practically a legislative measure, swept away the whole of the Brehon tenures of land together with the relation between chieftain and clansmen which they implied, and replaced them by the

¹ See Constantia Maxwell, *Irish History from Contemporary Sources, 1509-1610* (1923).

English system of land tenure, with succession in order of primogeniture, and the regular relations between landlord and tenant. To the natives it was small consolation that the colonists introduced greatly improved methods of farming, while the Brehon tenure had made all serious improvement impossible. Tillage had never been held in honour among the Gaels. Among the Teutons and the Latins the same hand that wielded the sword had guided the plough, and to this primitive fact may be due the growth among them of a civic capacity in addition to their capacity for war. Among the Gaels, on the other hand, fighting and the raising or lifting of cattle had from old time been esteemed the only proper occupations for a gentleman, and every full member of the clan was a gentleman; the work of tilling the soil had been left to the servile classes. Even when better methods of agriculture were introduced, then, the Irish continued to plough with a wooden share drawn by a rope tied to a pony's tail. For the rest, they knew only that they were being ousted from their lands by violence and, what was worse, by legal jugglery. For, in the confusion of the law, it became difficult to prove title to land, and there sprang up a loathsome class of adventurers who made it their business to spy out technical flaws in titles, in order that estates might be adjudged to escheat to the Crown, from which grants could be secured by the informers or their employers. Those were the great days of England's expansion. But the curse of Ireland has been that England so seldom sent thither of her best. As Goldwin Smith put it: 'The eagles took wing for the Spanish main, the vultures descended upon Ireland.'

When England did send of her best Ireland was better governed than when left to her native rulers, and had more chance of comparative peace. The cause of this lay in the characteristic qualities of the Irish, which were—and largely still are—those of clansmen. 'So far as willingness to submit to governors is concerned,' says Goldwin Smith with much truth, 'they are only too easily governed.' It is in a certain sense also true that 'loyalty is the great virtue of their political character.' But this loyalty has been limited by the horizon of the clan, or later by that of the groups, parties, or organisations to

which they chanced to attach themselves, and it has not excluded, but has rather involved, a violent objection to the rule of 'the other Irishman.'¹ This was perfectly well understood by the Irish themselves even in the days when the English government in Dublin was most feeble. When in 1441 the King proposed to appoint the Earl of Ormonde his lieutenant in Ireland, a deputation from the Irish Parliament then in London petitioned him, in terms of almost agonised entreaty, 'to ordain a mighty lord of this your Realm of England for to be your lieutenant of the said land . . . whom your people there will more favour and obey, than any man of that land's birth, for men of this Realm keep better justice, execute your laws, and favour more the common people there, and ever have done before this time, better than ever did any man of that land, or ever is like to do.'² The trouble was that the great lords, even when appointed, seldom went to Ireland, but exercised their authority through deputies, who were as often as not chosen from among the men on the spot. In effect, the deputy during the worst period of 'English government' was usually either an Earl of Kildare or an Earl of Ormonde, and it was the constant feuds between these two families which led in 1494 to the enactment by a Parliament at Drogheda of Poynings' Law, which for three centuries was to place the activities of the Irish Parliament under the control of the Royal Council in London. The result was that Ireland had neither the advantages of union with England, nor yet those of complete independence.

In these circumstances it was natural that the native Irish, threatened in their property, their customs and their religion, should seize every chance given by the weakness of the Crown to strike for freedom. In the sixteenth century they had found their opportunity in the life and death struggle of England with Spain; in

¹ 'The object of the Irregulars,' said Mr. Hogan, Minister for Agriculture, in the Dail on 29 November 1922, 'is not to pull down a Free State, or to set up a Republic, but to prevent the rule of the other Irishman.'

² Statute Rolls of Ireland, 20 Hen. VI, quoted by Herbert Wood in 'The Office of Chief Governor of Ireland, 1172-1509' (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxvi. sec. C, no. 12, 1923). This paper, interesting in itself, has a special value owing to the destruction of the documents on which it is based in the blowing up of the Four Courts.

the seventeenth century it came with the quarrel between King and Parliament that led to the civil war. The English and Scottish elements in Ireland were hopelessly at odds ; the Catholics of the Pale wanted only toleration under the protection of this or that great lord ; the Episcopalians, with Ormonde at their head, were for the King without the Covenant ; the Ulster and other Presbyterians were for the King with the Covenant ; and lastly there were those who were for the Commonwealth without either King or Covenant. The Catholic Gaels seized their opportunity, and the rising of 1641 rapidly developed into a war of extermination between the rival races and creeds, which has left bitter memories in Ireland to this day. Especially was this the case in Ulster, where Owen Roe O'Neill proved himself an able leader. The Protestant 'planters' were expelled from their holdings with every circumstance of barbarous cruelty, many of them being tortured and massacred ; the English soldiery retaliated ; and for nigh on ten years Ireland was a seething pot of misery and death. At last, in 1649, Oliver Cromwell came to discipline the country. The discipline was cruel, but for the time being effective. Within a year all organised armed resistance was at an end. Then followed a policy of settlement carried out ruthlessly and on a large scale. The Irish Catholic gentry were transplanted bodily beyond the Shannon into Connaught, with their servants and any of their tenants who cared to follow them, and the property thus left derelict in the other provinces was divided between adventurers who had advanced money and soldiers who had fought in Ireland. The majority of the Irish labourers remained at work under the new settlers ; and, though Catholic bands known as Tories continued to carry on a war of depredation from the shelter of the mountains and forests, the country gradually became peaceful and prosperous. The prosperity was increased by a fundamental alteration in its status. For, since Ireland was regarded as an integral part of the Commonwealth and her representatives attended the Parliament at Westminster, the restrictions on her trade were removed, with the result that the woollen industry revived and a shipping interest developed.

Had Cromwell lived longer, or had his system survived him, it is possible that this peace, bought at so bitter a price, might have continued; for, however great the sense of wrong felt by those who had suffered from his discipline, it is probable that they would have accommodated themselves to the new conditions had there been no obvious chance of altering them. But such a chance seemed to come in 1660 with the restoration of Charles II, which, at least to those who had suffered for their loyalty to the Crown, seemed to be the prelude to their own restoration. The King, however, was in no position to satisfy their demands. To dispossess the Cromwellian settlers entirely was impossible, and in the end they were made to surrender only a third of their lands to the former owners. Yet, though this settlement had the usual fate of half-measures and 'by offering at expedients, or at least the appearance of pleasing all, succeeded only in pleasing none,'¹ Ireland remained reasonably contented and prosperous during Charles II's reign. The lash of Anglican persecution fell rather upon the Presbyterians than on the Catholics, whose religion, though proscribed by law, was in fact but little disturbed. It was his successor, James II, who once more threw Protestants and Catholics into armed conflict.

The policy, pursued by James II, of depressing the Protestants and exalting the Roman Catholics, which was carried out ruthlessly by his bigoted lieutenant Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnell, roused the Protestants of Ulster to arms, and when in 1688 the deposed King sought refuge in France, Enniskillen and Londonderry had already closed their gates. In March 1689 James landed in Ireland with a small French force, and his short personal rule there forms an epoch in Irish history. It is a common boast of Irish Catholics that the Parliament summoned by James to Dublin, in which the Catholics were in an overwhelming majority, was the first popular assembly in Europe to pass an Act of Toleration; but it also enacted what was practically the confiscation of the property of all Protestants, and drew up a proscription list

¹ See Sir William Temple, 'An Essay on the Present State and Settlement of Ireland' (1667), published in *Select Letters to the Prince of Orange* (London, 1701), p. 197.

embracing two or three thousand Protestant names. The issue of the civil war that resulted was decided by William III's victories at the Boyne on 1 July 1690, and at Aughrim on 12 July 1691. The Roman Catholic Celts, helped by the French, had been beaten by the Protestant colonists, helped by England. Henceforward, for a hundred years, Protestant ascendancy in Ireland was to be undisputed.

That this ascendancy took so oppressive a form during the eighteenth century was due to the disputed title of the Hanoverian kings and the peculiar danger which threatened them from the side of Ireland. They reigned by a parliamentary title, and under the Act of Settlement their Protestantism was the indispensable condition of their kingship. To depress Roman Catholicism, which was naturally in sympathy with the pretenders, seemed therefore to be a policy dictated by every reason of State. In England, where the Catholics were in a weak minority, their disabilities, though galling and humiliating, did not amount to persecution; in Ireland, where they were in a great majority, a sterner method was considered necessary. It is impossible to say a word for the penal laws against the Irish Catholics from any standpoint of the present day; and even when looked at in their historical perspective they are bad enough, for they not only punished men for no ostensible reason but their faith, but they corrupted Protestantism itself by putting a premium on the meanest crimes of delation. All that can be said is that the policy which inspired them was in that age common to all States; that they were less cruel than the contemporary laws against the Protestants in France—to say nothing of Spain; that the Government did not enforce them in all their rigour; and that, even when it was considered necessary to make them effective, they were more often than not evaded with the connivance or the active assistance of decent Protestants. When all is said, however, the fact remains that the penal laws carried on and accentuated the old religious antagonism which had caused so much misery in Ireland, and left a bitter legacy to the present. For the memory of the Irish peasant is very long; he has no sense of historical perspective; and the wrongs suffered

by his ancestors centuries ago are to him as things of yesterday.¹

To the grievances of the Catholic population due to the penal laws and the expropriation of their lands the commercial policy of the British Government added others which were common to Catholic and Protestant alike. According to the principles underlying the colonial system, which at that time were universally accepted, the mother country, as bearing the burden of general defence, had the right not only to forbid direct trade between foreign countries and her dependencies, but to prevent the dependencies themselves from developing industries in serious competition with those which were her own chief sources of strength. Ireland was a dependency. British statesmen therefore felt themselves justified in using their power to discourage those Irish industries which seemed to them dangerous to vital English interests. The woollen trade, especially, had been for centuries the staple of England. The merchant marine, the nursery and reserve of the navy, was an essential part of the imperial system of defence. It was held, therefore, that these two resources must be rigorously guarded against competition from whatever quarter. Though the selfish jealousy of British traders doubtless played its part, the disastrous commercial policy of the Government towards Ireland during the eighteenth century was mainly determined by mistaken ideas as to what was necessary in the general interests of the Empire. It is untrue to assert, as has been often done, that there was a deliberate intention to ruin Irish trade in order to keep the turbulent island weak and subservient; for, if certain industries were discouraged and even destroyed, others were set up or encouraged. But the grievance was, none the less, a very real one. The shipping interest which had grown up during the short-lived Cromwellian Union was hampered, if not destroyed, in 1663 by the exclusion of Ireland from the benefits of the Navigation Acts. A flourishing

¹ The following extract from a threatening letter received by an Irish landlord after the abandonment of Ireland by the British illustrates this spirit: 'No protection "official" [i.e. Free State] or unofficial [i.e. Irregular] will save you from our vengeance. We might also say we hate Protestants, as they would grind us, and did when they had power. Our day has come.'

export trade in Irish manufactured wool had developed at the same time, and had been greatly stimulated by the settlement in Ireland of skilled weavers from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. This was prohibited by an Act of William III, an Act, comments Swift, 'fuller of greed than good policy.' It is true that the same king undertook to compensate Ireland by encouraging the old-established linen industry, and that the promise was later carried out. But the balance of benefits was weighed down heavily in favour of the predominant partner. 'To England,' wrote Swift, 'we are allowed to send nothing but linen, cloth, yarn, raw hides, skins, tallow and wood. In return coal, India goods, English woollens and silks, tobacco, hardware, earthenware, salt, etc., for which we pay cash.' The exchange, he complains, is therefore always heavily against Ireland.¹ 'If,' he says elsewhere, 'two-thirds of any kingdom's revenue be exported to another country, without one farthing of value in return; and if the said kingdom be forbidden the most profitable branches of trade wherein to employ the other third, and only allowed to traffic in importing those commodities which are most ruinous to itself; how shall that kingdom stand?'²

Absenteeism was also a growing evil in the eighteenth century. 'Another cause of the decay of trade, scarcity of money, and swelling of exchange,' says Swift, 'is the unnatural affection of our gentry to reside in and about London. . . . I demanded a reason . . . and find all their answers summed up under three heads, curiosity, pleasure, and loyalty to King George.' Primate Boulter, the very antithesis of Swift in all his political views, bears similar witness. 'The absentees spending their money there,' he wrote, 'the restraints upon our wool and woollen manufactures, the encrease in the establishment pensions are the great topics of complaint.'³

Primate Boulter also, incidentally, drew attention to the miserable and precarious condition of the mass of the peasantry, ever on the verge of starvation, pointed

¹ 'The present Miserable State of Ireland,' *Works* (ed. 1824), vii. 192.

² 'A Proposal that the Ladies should wear Irish Manufactures' (*ibid.* vii. 255).

³ To the Duke of Newcastle, 23 Oct. 1729, in *Letters written by His Excellency Hugh Boulter, D.D., etc.* (Dublin, 1770).

out the causes, and suggested a remedy. 'Our present tillage,' he wrote, 'falls very far short of answering the demands of this nation, which occasions our importing corn from England and other places: and whilst our poor have bread to eat, we do not complain of this; but by tilling so little, if our crop fails, or yields indifferently, our poor have not money to buy bread. This was the case in 1725 and last year, and without a prodigious crop will be more so this year. As the winter subsistence of the poor is chiefly potatoes, this scarcity drove the poor to begin with their potatoes before they were full grown, so that they have spent their stock about two months sooner than usual.' He ascribes the trouble to the fact that many persons have hired large tracts of land and stocked them with cattle. The remedy he suggests is a Bill to compel the tillage of five acres in every hundred. 'We hope that if this tillage bill takes place, to keep our youth at home, to employ our poor, and not to be in danger of a famine among the poor upon any little miscarriage of our harvests.'¹

This gives the key to the mystery of all the agrarian unrest in Ireland down to the present day. Both in soil and climate the greater part of the country is better suited for pasture than tillage; from time immemorial its main wealth has consisted in cattle; and in normal times the temptation of the land-owner or large farmer has always been to let his grazing lands encroach upon his arable. The effect of this in a country where the poor have been, and still are, wholly dependent upon the land for subsistence is easy to see. Pasture employs far less labour than tillage, and the laying down of land to grass often involved in addition the clearing away of small holdings which, though uneconomic, at least enabled the peasant and his family to exist. The evil was increased by the introduction in 1610 of the potato, which, being a crop easily raised and easily hidden, became the staple food of the people during the troubles of the seventeenth century. The standard of living of the common folk, already low enough, was thus still further depressed. In the eighteenth century the mass of the poor tenants

¹ To the Archbishop of Canterbury, 24 February, 1727. On the 28 October he wrote to the same effect to the Duke of Newcastle.

had settled into the conditions which, in the main, were to prevail until the revolution effected by the Land Acts from 1881 onwards. The typical holding was a patch of ground large enough to grow potatoes to feed the family during the year, with a thatched hovel shared by the family with the pig—‘the gentleman that pays the rent.’ The standard of living being so low, there was no bar to early marriages; and, the race being naturally prolific, there was a constant tendency for the population to outgrow the resources of the country, and a large part of it lived always on the very verge of hunger or of actual starvation. The full extent of the evil was not revealed until the appalling famine of 1846. But for more than a century before this there had been frequent threats of famine, and occasional actual famines, the worst being that of 1739, which is commemorated by the obelisk on the top of the hill of Killiney. The agrarian problem, then, was recognised as existing early in the eighteenth century; it had as yet, however, no political significance, and it was only towards the end of the century that smouldering agrarian discontents found a violent outlet during the political agitations which culminated in the rebellion of 1798.

Never was the use of armed force to secure the redress of political grievances better justified than in the case of the Irish Volunteers of 1778. The eighteenth century in Ireland was an era of magnificent development in the arts of life among the governing classes, to which the decayed and now largely ruined architectural splendours of Dublin bear melancholy witness. But the country had to pay heavily for these superficial glories. Its political life was wholly corrupted by the false relation in which it stood to Great Britain, which was neither one of complete union nor one of reasonable independence. The Parliament in Dublin, controlled by borough-mongers and packed with placemen, represented even in theory only the Protestant minority, and the Crown controlled it, through the ‘undertakers,’ by methods of unveiled corruption. There was no wholesome rivalry of parties: only the perpetual struggle between the ‘English interest’ and the ‘Irish interest’ for places and power. Primate Boulter’s correspondence throws a curious light

on this state of things. His munificence was princely, his charities boundless, and, as we have seen, he had the interests of the poor at heart. Yet for him the Church over which he ruled was primarily a bulwark of the royal authority, and whenever an Irish see falls vacant he presses for the appointment of an English bishop, not because English divines are more virtuous or more learned, but because they can be better trusted to guard the interests of the House of Hanover and the Whig Oligarchy. It was the policy which not only persecuted Roman Catholics but, by imposing in 1704 the sacramental test upon all office-holders, alienated the sturdy Presbyterian population of the North, adding everywhere religious to agrarian discontents.

In 1772 these discontents found vent in the Protestant North, where the 'Steelboys' rose against the exactions of absentee landlords. The principal grievance was the ousting of Protestant yeomen from their farms in order to divide them up among Roman Catholic cottiers, who collectively paid a higher rent. The results were disastrous alike to Ireland and to England. Something like a war of religion was one result, the North being terrorised by lawless Protestant associations known as Peep-o'-day Boys, while rival and equally lawless Catholic associations known as Defenders sprang up to oppose them. Thus began the organisation of the conflicting creeds and interests in Ireland into powerful, more or less secret societies; for the Peep-o'-Day Boys were the progenitors of the Orangemen, first organised in 1789, while out of the Defenders sprang, in part at least, the Ribbonmen, with their descendants and offshoots. Another result was even more fateful. The dispossessed Presbyterians from Ulster emigrated in large numbers to North America, carrying with them an implacable hatred of England, and they powerfully contributed to the success of the revolution which established the independence of the United States.

Both this Revolution and the great Revolution in France that followed reacted strongly upon Ireland. The difficulty of obtaining recruits for the American war led to the stripping of the country of British troops, and when in 1778 France allied herself with the revolted

colonies, some 40,000 Irish Volunteers were enrolled, under the command of the Protestant gentry, to guard Ireland against a French invasion. These Volunteers were wholly loyal to the Crown ; but they were none the less determined to use their opportunity to secure redress of the more crying grievances of the country. A convention of Volunteers in Dublin, debating with all the forms of a representative assembly, but backed by all the force of an army, demanded the removal of the restrictions on Irish trade. Under this pressure the Government gave way, and in 1779, among other concessions, Ireland was placed on an equal footing with Great Britain as regards trade with her colonies. Other demands and concessions followed, culminating in the repeal of Poyning's Law in 1782 and the recognition by treaty of the sovereign authority of the Irish Parliament. In Grattan's view, Ireland was at last a nation.

It was soon clear that it was a nation only in name, if by a nation we mean a large aggregation of people bound together by a consciousness of common sentiments, interests, and aims. 'Grattan's Parliament' was at the outset no more representative than its predecessors ; it was scarcely more really independent ; and to the end it was equally corrupt. It passed certain useful laws ; did something to encourage industry ; and in 1793, under strong pressure from the British Government, it took a step towards the removal of a crying wrong by giving the vote, though not the right to sit in Parliament, to Roman Catholics. But in effect it was little more than an exalted debating society, to which fashionable Dublin crowded in order to listen to the rolling periods of rival orators. It was managed, after as before, by the Ministers of the Crown in London, acting through the Lord Lieutenant and his Secretary ; and the method was corruption. How little it represented the people as a whole is shown by the constant disorders in the country, which necessitated the passing, during the thirteen years of its existence, of more, and more stringent, 'Coercion Acts' than were afterwards passed by the Imperial Parliament during the whole period of the Union.

The scattered and often mutually hostile elements of discontent gathered new force and a new cohesion under

the influence of revolutionary ideas which, after 1789, were imported from France and found acceptance more especially among the Presbyterians of Ulster. Grattan and his fellows had worked for the independence of Ireland : but for them this independence was not incompatible with union with Great Britain under a common Crown ; they urged, as later the Nationalists were to urge, that an independent Ireland would not be a weakness, but a strength to the Empire ; and their vision of this Ireland was not that of a democracy in the modern sense, in which power would pass to the Roman Catholic and Gaelic majority, but a country prospering under the enlightened rule of a Parliament in the main aristocratic and Protestant. Far other were the ideas of Theobald Wolfe Tone, who with Napper Tandy, Thomas Russell and others founded the society of the United Irishmen in 1791. Inspired by the principles of the French Revolution, he expressed unqualified contempt for the Constitution under the treaty of 1782, declared that the complete redress of Irish grievances could only be obtained by the co-operation of Irishmen of all races and creeds, and aimed at the establishment of an independent Irish Republic, if necessary by armed force.

The United Irishmen, whose ranks were recruited from both the Protestant and Catholic organisations, aimed at first only at parliamentary reform, as the first step in the direction of a democratic Republic. The ill success of their agitation, however, and above all the outbreak in 1793 of the war between Great Britain and revolutionary France, led them to base their hopes on a French invasion, and in February 1796 Tone went to Paris and entered into those negotiations which led, at the end of the year, to the abortive expedition under Hoche. When, in 1798, the rebellion did break out in Ireland, its course and outcome showed how remote were Wolfe Tone's ideals, though not in themselves ignoble, from anything which the grim realities of Irish life made possible. The rising of the Catholic peasantry in the South at once developed into a war of extermination against the Protestants. Unspeakable barbarities were committed, and were punished with ruthless cruelty. The Ulster Protestant Republicans, seeing the turn things were taking, held

sullenly aloof, and their failure to rise settled the fate of the rebellion. Thus ended, in a welter of blood and sectarian hate, the short-lived experiment of uniting the Irish sects in a single nation.

This outcome marked the break-down, not only of Tone's ideal, but of the experiment in an independent Government for Ireland. Already, so early as 1785, Pitt had made overtures for free trade between the two countries, it is supposed as a step preliminary to their eventual political union. He had forced upon the reluctant Parliament in College Green the Act enfranchising the Catholics in 1793, but the proposals for complete Catholic emancipation broke down, since in this matter Pitt had not the support of the Crown. With the end of the rebellion the question of the legislative Union was taken up in earnest. Everything, indeed, seemed to point to its expediency from the point of view of both Great Britain and Ireland. Under the Constitution of 1782 the sole link which bound the two countries together was the Crown; and how fragile this link might on occasion prove had been shown by the violent difference of opinion between the two Parliaments on the question of the regency during the first madness of King George III, which was only saved from leading to a breach by the opportune recovery of the King. The peril had been emphasised by the rebellion of 1798, which proved that the Constitution of 1782 was no safeguard against armed revolt. In short, at a time when the Empire was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with France, the British Cabinet had no option but to take measures to put a stop to the peril. The best way to do so seemed to be to follow the precedent set by the union with Scotland, and to unite the British islands in one Kingdom with a common Parliament. From the Irish point of view there was also much to be said for this course. Apart from the fact that it would remove the last relics of dependence, by raising Ireland to full partnership with Great Britain in the government of the Empire, it seemed to give the only hope of bringing peace to that distracted country by making it possible to concede the just claims of the Catholic majority without imperilling the existence of the Protestant minority. The horrors of the rebellion had revived in all its old

bitterness the mutual hatred of the two religions in Ireland; and the Irish Parliament, engaged now in a policy of cruel repression, was little likely to concede to Catholics those political rights the withholding of which made a lasting peace impossible. For the Protestants to have done so in an independent Ireland would, indeed, have been to commit political suicide; Catholic emancipation, without the Union, would have meant, not the abolition of ascendancy, but the substitution of one ascendancy for another. Under the Union it could be carried out without violating the rights and imperilling the liberties of the Protestants; for in the Imperial Parliament the Catholics, even when fully represented, would still be in a minority. This was fully understood by Irish Catholics, and it was not from them that the opposition to the Union came. The mass of the people were, of course, voiceless; they probably had no opinions on the matter; and certainly they displayed throughout a complete apathy. The Catholic priesthood as a whole, however, and notably the bishops, favoured the Union in the belief that it would at once be followed by measures for the political emancipation of Catholics, the removal of the grievances of the tithes payable to the Established Church, and the concurrent endowment of their own. By a curious irony, the bitterest opponents of the Union were the clergy of the Established Church and the Orangemen, who rightly feared that, sooner or later, it would mean the end of the Protestant ascendancy. As for Grattan, who to the last resisted the destruction of the Constitution he had created, his opposition to the Union was partly due to his intimate knowledge of his countrymen. He had no belief in democracy, least of all in such a country as Ireland; he feared that under the Union the political leadership of the people would be taken out of the hands of the country gentry; and he prophesied that the time would come when Ireland would send as her representatives to Westminster 'a hundred of the greatest rascals in the kingdom.' All his eloquence, however, availed nothing; the bill establishing the Union was pushed through the Irish Parliament by the accustomed methods, and on the 1st of January 1801, it came into effect.

II.—IRELAND UNDER THE UNION

The history of Ireland under the Union is a history of lost opportunities, for which the blame may be impartially distributed between the people of both islands. The Act of Union itself was a most imperfect instrument for the purposes for which it was intended; for, owing to the necessity for conciliating the forces dominant at the time in Ireland it left intact, and even guaranteed the existence of institutions which the mass of the Irish people felt to be unjust and oppressive. The Established Church, immensely rich, inefficient, and corrupt, survived as a heavy charge upon a poverty-stricken population which owed it no allegiance, and even its reform was successfully resisted on the ground that the resulting loss of patronage would weaken the Government. The separate administrative and judicial system survived: and this too tended to be, after as before, a rich resort for party jobbery. The land system, with all its growing evils and miseries, was left untouched. All these ills, however, which long custom had made familiar, might have been endured for a while in patience, and in time corrected through the legitimate influence of Ireland's representatives in the Imperial Parliament, but for a factor which from the very outset tended to vitiate the whole experiment of the Union. This was the non-fulfilment by the Government of the implied terms of the contract, so far as the Irish Catholics were concerned.

The Roman Catholics had accepted the Union on the understanding that it was to be at once followed by their full political emancipation. Had this agreement been carried out, there can be little doubt but that they would have settled down quietly under the new order. They had the vote; yet at the first general election after the passing of the Act they made no protest, and it was only in a single constituency that objection was taken to a candidate on the ground that he had voted for the Union.¹ The uncompromising upholders of Ireland's separate nationhood were still to be found mainly among the

¹ See *Annual Register* for 1802, which gives a most interesting account of conditions in Ireland in the year following the Union.

Protestants, and the futile and tragic rising of Robert Emmet in 1803 showed how little following they had as yet among the people. Unfortunately, the enlightened policy of Pitt suffered shipwreck on the rock of King George III's obstinate conscience, backed by the uncompromising Protestantism of some of his advisers, for whom the Established Church was still the chief corner-stone of the State. So long as the old King lived there could be no question of Catholic emancipation; his successor was almost equally stubborn; and when, at last, the long-deferred measure of justice received the royal assent in 1828 it was too late to serve as a means of reconciliation. It had even now not been freely conceded, but was wrung from a reluctant Government by the dangerous agitation led by Daniel O'Connell and organised in the formidable Catholic Association. The results were disastrous for Great Britain and Ireland alike. The Irish had been taught a lesson which they have never forgotten; that what they cannot obtain from the justice of the British people they can obtain from their fears. Politically the Union had, from the point of view of the Catholic Irish, proved a failure; and the movement for Emancipation swelled into a movement for Repeal. Last, but not least, the Catholic agitation widened the gulf between the religions in Ireland itself, where the rival ideals of Nationalism and Unionism became more and more identified with those of the rival creeds.

The agitation for Catholic emancipation was followed by the war against tithes, and the upshot points the same moral. The exaction of tithes from the Catholic peasantry in order to support the clergy of the Established Church was a crying wrong; yet it was only after years of agitation and violence that this wrong was righted, or at least made less conspicuously oppressive, by the Tithe Commutation Act of 1838. It was not until 1864, as the outcome of yet further violence, that the Church of Ireland was itself disestablished, to its own great moral advantage, and with it the last effective remnant of the old system of Protestant ascendancy.

The disestablishment of the Irish Church was the most obvious immediate result of the Fenian movement which, starting in the United States after the Civil War, had

embarked on an organised effort to secure the independence of Ireland by force. It was the beginning of the policy of argument by means of bombs, daggers, and revolvers which was in the future to prove so effective in influencing the views of His Majesty's Ministers. In Ireland itself the enthusiasm for independence had languished since the collapse of O'Connell's Repeal agitation. The sacred torch rekindled by Robert Emmet in 1803 had, indeed, been grasped from time to time by other hands; it had lighted a flame of rebellion in 1848, the year of rebellions everywhere, only to be quickly extinguished; it had lighted yet another in 1867, with even less effect. It needed more than an abstract ideal to stir the mass of the Irish people to action; and the Nationalist movement only became of real importance when the genius of Parnell linked it with the agitation for agrarian reform. The true Revolution in Ireland began, not in '48 nor in '67, but with the foundation of the Land League by Michael Davitt in 1879. This, which changed presently into the National League, was the precursor and model of the Sinn Fein organisation in its policy of paralysing the organs of the Government and superseding them by a system based upon terror. But the actual driving forces behind it, as in the case of the later organisations, were less political than economic; and it was not without reason that Parnell set his face against the tentative efforts of the Government to remove agrarian grievances, since these gave him the impulse needed in order to move the people towards the goal at which he aimed. What this was he made clear in his speech at Cincinnati on the 23rd of February 1880. He there declared that the first and essential step towards the undermining of British authority in Ireland was to destroy the Irish landlords. Thus, he said, might Ireland become independent. 'Let us not forget,' he added, 'that this is the ultimate goal at which all Irishmen aim. None of us, whether we be in America or Ireland, or wherever we may be, will be satisfied until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England.'

In the political developments that followed two things may here be noted. One is the misunderstanding of the essential factors of the Irish problem by English Home

Rulers. The other is the complete scepticism with which the Irish viewed their conciliatory advances. The misunderstanding is plain from the language used by Gladstone in introducing the first Government of Ireland Bill in 1886. The Bill itself was a miserable half-measure, which conceded the shadow but hardly any of the substance of nationality and was later by universal consent admitted to be unworkable. In introducing it the Prime Minister eloquently insisted that, so far from weakening, it would strengthen the Union, and he enlarged on this theme in language that reads oddly in the light of later events, pointing to the happy results of the grant of 'local autonomy' in the case of Austria and Hungary, Russia and Finland, and more especially Norway and Sweden, 'now united by a tie never to be broken.'¹ Parnell and his party accepted the Bill in the same spirit as the Irish labour leaders accepted the Treaty of 1921—as a resting-place on the road to Jerusalem. If British Liberals chose to believe that they would be satisfied with 'some sort of local autonomy,' it was not for the Nationalists to undeceive them. As for their scepticism, there was as little cause for gratitude for this concession as for any of the other concessions previously made to Irish clamour. Indeed there was less. In 1881 Gladstone had denounced Parnell and his party as 'marching through rapine to the disintegration and dismemberment of the Empire,'² which was precisely their declared object. If in 1886 he announced his sudden conversion to Home Rule, it needed but little cynicism to associate this miracle with the fact that Parnell and his followers held the balance of power in the House of Commons and were in a position to make and unmake Governments.

It is necessary to say this much about the Liberal Home Rule policy because it has been commonly maintained that, had Gladstone's arguments prevailed in 1886,

¹ Speech introducing the Government of Ireland Bill, 8 April, 1886, and speech at Manchester, 25 June 1886. The union of Norway and Sweden under one Crown was dissolved in 1905. It is to be noted that Mr. Arthur Griffith, in advocating the acceptance of the Treaty by the Dail, expressed the hope that in time the complete separation of Great Britain and Ireland would be achieved by friendly agreement, as in the case of Norway and Sweden.

² Speech at Liverpool, 27 October 1881.

Actual words were :-

cepted to the lips in treason, and marching through rapine and bloodshed to the dismemberment of the Empire."

R.C.

the later troubles would have been avoided. To think this is to imagine a vain thing. Neither the Home Rule Bill of 1886 nor those which followed would have satisfied the national aspirations of the Irish idealists; and, so long as Ireland continued to be bound by any political, and yet more by any fiscal, ties to England, they would have found rich fuel for further conflagrations in the material grievances of the people, which would have been ascribed after as before to the malign influence of the larger and richer island, with its population of stupid, unimaginative, money-grubbing hypocrites.

The truth is that England as the economic enemy has for a long time past loomed larger in the Irish imagination than England as the pedantic upholder of alien conceptions of law and order; and for this reason it is essential to the understanding of the political history of the revolution to know something of the economic factors by which it was largely determined. It is proposed, then, to close this introduction by a brief review of some aspects of the economic life of Ireland under the Union, in order to see how far the charges brought against Great Britain in general, and the Act of Union in particular, are substantial and to what extent the movements of revolt have been due to real or to imaginary grievances.

Certainly imagination has had its share, as was to be expected; for Ireland is prolific of myths. Even out of the prosaic statistics of the trade relations between the two islands the Celtic genius has fashioned a legend which has had, and is likely yet to have, unfortunate effects. This legend was set forth in all seriousness by a conspicuous Irishman, Mr. Darrell Figgis, in his 'The Economic Case for Irish Independence,' published in 1920. It is that of the persistent malice of the English in their economic relations with Ireland. Prussians, Austrians, and Russians it seems, never treated their subject nationalities with such deliberate and malicious injustice. Finland, for instance, whose economic vitality is contrasted with the economic stagnation of Ireland, received injuries as a nation, but these injuries were never intended to lay her economically in ruins; and even of Czarism it could not be said that it ever sought such ruin as an instrument of government. 'Ruin has been, however, in one form

or another the principle of government in Ireland . . . and England has always regarded Ireland as an economic outlander to be stifled and strangled lest it prove a rival; and as this has involved the evacuation of population, she has undertaken this by every means, the mildest being local grants in aid of emigration. . . . The result is that Ireland, alone among subject nations, has not only been oppressed, but blighted and ruined.' As a crowning proof of this blight and ruin is given the fact that in 1913 Great Britain's trade with Ireland amounted to £135,000,000, a figure only exceeded by that of her trade with the United States. 'Ireland,' Mr. Figgis adds, 'because of the ruin to which design had brought her, became one of England's richest possessions.'

This singular deduction, which could be corrected by reference to a text-book of economics, has of course only a politico-pathological interest. The major premiss, however—namely, that England has always sought the ruin of Ireland as a principle of government—is of importance because Young Ireland firmly believes it and—until recently—equally firmly believed that, 'British rule' once disposed of, there would begin for Ireland, protected by tariff walls against England's unfair competition, an era of unexampled prosperity. The latter belief was always a matter of speculation and hope, and it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it. The other, however, has had, and still has, great political importance, and is therefore worth some examination.

When the belief in the hostility and selfishness of the British first took root in the Irish mind there was some reason for it, as has been pointed out above. But one of the declared objects of the Union was to put an end to the economic grievances of Ireland by raising her from the position of a dependency into that of a full political and economic partnership with Great Britain; and this was achieved, to all seeming, under the terms of the agreement between the two countries, which were henceforward to be regarded as one. It was not to be expected that the new status of Ireland would at once cure the economic ills inherited from the system of the past, but certainly those responsible for the Union in both countries confidently expected a rapid amelioration of those ills as

its result. It is, then, interesting to inquire how far these expectations were realised and, conversely, how much truth there is in the charge, vehemently brought by Irish Nationalists of all complexions, that it was the Union that was responsible for the economic stagnation of the greater part of Ireland.

It is urged that the Union, so far from placing Ireland in an equally favourable economic position with that of Great Britain, robbed her of the protection given to her nascent industries by the legislation of the Irish Parliament since 1783, and ruined them by exposing them to the full competition of the more fully organised and wealthier interests in England. The financial provisions of the Act, it is argued, were unjust, and led to the gross over-taxation of Ireland. Lastly, it is maintained that it was the Union Government which was responsible for the misery of the Irish peasantry, culminating in the appalling famine of 1846, for which it could devise no better remedy than to assist the depopulation of Ireland by its legislation. Of these *gravamina* it is proposed here to examine only the first and the last; for the question of the over-taxation of Ireland is too complicated to be dealt with summarily, has received more public attention than the others, and will shortly again be reviewed by the Commission to be set up under the Treaty to settle the fiscal relations between Great Britain and the Irish Free State. The question of the depopulation of Ireland may be conveniently taken first, as it has certainly that which has produced the most profound impression upon the Irish popular imagination and excited the most bitter feelings against England.

It has been repeated a thousand times in the speeches and pamphlets of Sinn Fein propagandists that the population of Ireland has been halved under the Union. As a matter of fact, it nearly doubled during the first forty years of the Union, and it is to this portentous fact that the subsequent woes of Ireland must be mainly ascribed. It was not till after the great famine that the steady process of mass emigration, and consequent depopulation, began. The mere statistics of the increase of population, from the time of the setting up of Grattan's Parliament onward, are eloquent of the resulting miseries, since there was no equivalent increase in the resources of the country.

In 1785 there were 2,845,932 people in Ireland ; in 1803 their numbers had grown to 5,356,594 ; in 1845 they had reached the portentous total, for so poor and small a country, of 8,295,061. The great impulse to this increase was given by two events which happened in 1793—namely, the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics and the outbreak of the great war with revolutionary France. The enfranchisement of the Catholic peasantry tempted the landowners to break up their estates into small holdings, in order to increase the number of 40-shilling voters, and with them their own influence. The war created a demand for cereals, and so also encouraged the change from pasture to tillage and the multiplication of small holdings. In these circumstances the low standard of living among the peasantry, accustomed as they were to live for most of the year on potatoes and buttermilk alone, led to a vastly rapid increase of the population, with indefinite sub-lettings and subdivisions of farms already too small to support a family in decency. By these means, combined with antiquated and slovenly methods of agriculture, it came about that the vast majority of the Irish cultivators were living on the very verge of starvation.

The peril of the situation was disguised by the artificial conditions during the war, which made it possible to make a profit out of the smallest holding. It was made yet more perilous by the reckless, but quite understandable, competition for land which, in spite of the utter insecurity of tenure under the system in vogue, led to the proffering of rents of which the payment could in the most favourable circumstances leave to the cultivator no more than a bare subsistence. Then, with the conclusion of peace in 1815, came the catastrophic fall in the price of corn and the consequent swing back from tillage to pasture, favoured by the new facilities offered by steamships for the exportation of cattle. Clearly, economic orthodoxy, and indeed ordinary common sense, demanded a system of farming on a large scale ; the Irish landlords were tempted by the changed demand of the times to clear their estates of the swarms of ragged tenants, and to concentrate their tiny holdings into farms of the size which sound economy demanded ; and many of them, themselves heavily embarrassed, carried out this process with a ruthless dis-

regard for the fate of the unfortunate people evicted.¹ The charge brought by Irish Nationalists against the Imperial Government is that, agreeing in this matter with the landlords' point of view, it passed legislation to facilitate the process of eviction, legislation which culminated in the Poor Law of 1838—which provided the workhouse as a refuge to families evicted from their holdings—and the famous Gregory clause (10 Vic. c. 31), which laid down that no person in possession of more than a quarter of an acre of land could be deemed to be destitute, and that it was not lawful for the Guardians to relieve such persons—a rule which had tragic consequences during the famine.

The famine of 1846 has long been regarded by the mass of the Irish people, and especially those of the dispersion, as the climax of this process, and responsibility for this tragic national disaster is the most formidable of the indictments brought by them against the Union Government. It has been asserted, and unfortunately also widely believed, that the ghastly mortality of the famine years was the crowning achievement of a diabolical policy directed to depopulating the country. Others, while seeing the gross absurdity of so appalling a charge, would make the Union Government responsible for the famine, on the ground that it did nothing to reform the conditions which made it inevitable; and they ascribe the ghastly developments of the tragedy itself to the callousness or carelessness of those in authority, who took no proper measures to cope with the trouble in its beginnings. It is true that the magnitude of the disaster was not at first grasped in England; that the export of corn from Ireland

¹ Lord Clarendon said in 1839: 'The landlords are the real obstacle to improvement, and their condition generally is deplorable. As a body they are insolvent. Many of them lack the first necessities of life, and, though still exercising the rights of property, they can perform none of its duties') George O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (1921), p. 136.

Compare with this, however, the Devon Commission Report: 'Undoubtedly, where the landed proprietor is possessed of an unencumbered estate, or has the command of money, he may give assistance and encouragement to his tenants in the most advantageous manner; and a duty belongs to his position in this respect, which we find to be most faithfully performed in many cases' (p. 1123).

The insolvency of the landlords was due, *inter alia*, to their passion for ostentation, notably in the matter of building, which left their estates in many instances heavily encumbered. The hardness they displayed towards their tenants was very often dictated by their creditors.

was not at once stopped ; and that the relief measures at first authorised were hampered by considerations of economic pedantry quite out of place in so overwhelming a situation. When, however, the true facts were known in England there was certainly no callousness displayed. Money and supplies were poured into Ireland from both public and private sources ; crowds of voluntary workers came from England to help in the organisation of relief ; and if these efforts did not avail to save many thousands from misery and death, this was due partly to the fact that they began to be made too late, partly to the extreme difficulty of distributing relief in a country where as yet communications were primitive and slow. It is argued that, had an Irish Parliament been in existence, it would have taken measures betimes to prevent the famine. It may be so. Yet there had been famines in Ireland before the Union, and the Irish Parliament had taken no such measures. That in this matter the Imperial Parliament departed from precedent shows how deep was the impression made in England of Ireland's tragedy. For it was the age of *laissez-faire*, and any legislative interference with the ruthless working out of the law of supply and demand cut clean across all the accepted canons of economic orthodoxy.

The unchallenged sway of this economic doctrine has been suggested as an excuse for, or at least as an explanation of, the apparent supineness of the Government in allowing the agrarian problem after the Union to outgrow the possibility of any but a tragic solution. Yet it is difficult to see what effective measures could have been taken, even had the full extent of the evil been recognised. Opinion was not ripe for any such policy as that later embodied in the Land Acts, and in any case such a policy would have provided no more than a temporary palliative, and would have had less chance then than now of keeping pace with the increase of population. The same is true of the suggestion that the waste lands of the country should have been reclaimed and brought under cultivation with Government aid. For, as has been already pointed out, Ireland could not have supported in decency by agriculture alone one-half of its population at that time, even if all the waste lands had been tilled. The only sound

solution of the pressing problem presented by the vast congestion of population was emigration, which had begun even before the famine, as yet mainly to Great Britain. The Government was right to assist this process; its mistake was that it did not direct and organise it on a large enough scale.

The violent resentment of the Irish at being forced to leave their country can be understood by those who know how passionately the Gael, whether in Ireland or Scotland, clings to the soil on which he has been born and bred; and in the case of the Irish political sentiment and the awful memories of the famine have kept alive and exaggerated a grievance which the Scottish Highlanders have long since forgotten. Yet it was neither the selfishness of the landlords, nor the policy of the Government, nor the effects of the great famine itself, that gave the strongest impulse to the great emigration from Ireland. It was the opening up of the fertile plains of the Mississippi Valley to settlement. The proof of this is that the period of the great emigration from Ireland, from the middle of the last century onwards, was also that of the great emigration from other European countries, including Great Britain. After all, why should the Irish peasant be content to eke out a precarious existence on a tiny potato plot, or even as the tenant of a twenty-acre farm, 'when land could be had for nothing in the Mississippi Valley, gold could be picked up by California rivers, and one could get fabulous wages without going beyond New York'?¹ In any case, the fact that Ireland is a small island with a prolific population will always make emigration a necessity; for, whatever solution of the agrarian problem may be found, still—to quote Sir Horace Plunkett—'the evergreen question "What shall we do with our boys?" remains to be answered.'

Sinn Féin offers as the solution of this problem the industrial development of the country. This brings us to the further charge made against Great Britain, namely, that she has, after as before the Union, consistently used her preponderant power to arrest and stifle this development. It is doubtless true that certain industries—e.g.

¹ Father Walter MacDonald, *Some Ethical Questions of Peace and War* (1919).

woollen, silk, glass manufactures—which had begun to revive under the protective system established by Grattan's Parliament succumbed more or less rapidly to British competition after the Union. Others, however—e.g. the linen, cotton, and shipbuilding industries—while they died out in the South of Ireland, grew and flourished exceedingly in the north-eastern counties of Ulster. Since these counties were in no way favoured above the others by British legislation, this seems at first sight to cut the ground entirely from under the feet of those who say that the Union ruined Irish industry. Indeed, even in the South, while certain manufactures decayed, others—e.g. distilling, brewing—sprang up and flourished, and it is easy to show from statistics that the effect of the Union, so far from 'ruining' Ireland, was greatly to increase her wealth. One example may suffice. Between 1790 and 1800 the value of Irish exports had sunk by £109,357; in 1826 they were worth £4,438,942 more than in 1800, the year of the Union. This increase was due partly to the rapid development of the linen industry and of distilling, but more especially to the growth of the export trade in agricultural produce, for which industrialised England now offered a convenient and steady market.¹

This vast increase in the agricultural prosperity of the South of Ireland, accentuated as it has been in recent years

¹ For tables of statistics see R. M. Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union* (ed. 1848), and *Thom's Statistics of Ireland* (1852). In 1800 the total value of exports from Ireland was £4,015,976 and that of imports £4,299,493. In 1919 Ireland's exports were valued at £176,000,000 and her imports at £159,000,000. Of the exports 99 per cent. went to Great Britain, and of the imports 85½ per cent. came from Great Britain. The reasons for the vast increase in the export of store cattle from Ireland to England best illustrate the economic interdependence of the two countries. 'Farmers in the more favoured regions of the country do not want to be bothered with the rearing of calves, which is a slow and not very lucrative business, and so this is left to the men in the high wet regions of the west and north of England or the wet parts of Ireland, where the grass will not fatten adult animals. Thus the bullock has two or three stages of life under our specialized system; he begins on the hills of the west and north, or in Ireland . . . at two or three years old he travels to the good grass of the west or centre of England; he may then be quite fat by the end of the summer, in which case his life's work is done; or, if he is not fully fat, he goes further east to the yards of Norfolk to be finished at Christmas, or Easter at the latest' (Sir John Russell, 'The Influence of Geographical Factors on the Agricultural Activities of a Population,' presidential address to the Geographical Association, 1923. See *The Geographical Teacher*, No. 65, vol. xii. part 1).

by the operation of the Land Acts and the economic effects of the Great War, does not in the eyes of Irish Nationalists compensate for the loss of that industrial and commercial prosperity to the past existence of which the decayed glories of many of the cities bear witness. To restore this prosperity and these glories has been one of the objects of Sinn Fein, which believes that this object can be achieved by surrounding Ireland with a tariff wall as a protection against unfair British competition. The political importance of this view is that it was this more than anything else that made it practically impossible to reach an accommodation with Protestant and industrial Ulster on the question of Home Rule ; for Ulster thrives on Free Trade and—as a Belfast banker said to me—it is not bigotry or intolerance that inspires the *non possumus* attitude of the North, but ‘fear’—fear that under a Parliament of United Ireland the trade of Ulster, and the credit upon which it rests, would be ruined by wild and visionary fiscal experiments. The matter is thus one of urgent practical importance to all those who wish to see Ireland united. What, then, were the causes of the industrial decay of the South ?

Revolutionary Sinn Fein ascribes this decay to the deliberate, selfish, and malevolent policy of Great Britain. Others, more plausibly, ascribe it to certain effects of the Union which had not been foreseen by those responsible for it. The intention of the framers of the Act of Union had been to establish economic equality between the two islands. The actual effect of the measure, it is argued, was wholly different. The industries of Great Britain, it is pointed out, had been firmly established by a century of rigid protection ; those of Ireland, long suppressed by the penal laws and the commercial code, were only just struggling into life ; and therefore to break down the protective barriers between the two countries was to deliver the weaker hopelessly into the hands of the stronger. The temporary measure of protection—10 per cent. on certain classes of goods imported from Great Britain into Ireland—allowed by the terms of the Act was wholly inadequate ; and the moment these duties were removed certain Irish industries—e.g. silk-weaving and glass-making—at once perished, while others—e.g. the manufacture

of woollens—died a more lingering death. It is urged, in short, that ‘the opening of free trade between these two countries, which stood on such different industrial planes, operated simply to confer a preference on the more developed,’ since the British manufacturer, ‘because of the greater capital at his command, and the superior processes which he had adopted,’ could undersell his Irish competitors in their own country.¹

The weak point in this argument is that it applies only to the South of Ireland; for no such decay followed the removal of protection from the Protestant North, whither indeed some of the dying industries of the South migrated, to flourish upon a more congenial soil. To this objection the reply is made that, if north-east Ulster flourished while the rest of Ireland decayed, this was not due to any superior quality of its inhabitants, but to the fact that in Protestant Ulster alone had the ‘Ulster custom’ in land tenure made it possible for the people to accumulate capital, since there ‘the practice of the landlord taking the whole surplus produce of the land did not prevail.’ Want of capital, it is urged, was the trouble in the South. The landlords, as a class, were ostentatious and improvident, while ‘the penal laws had condemned the vast majority of the people to a life of idleness and poverty; the land laws had deprived the agriculturist of all inducement to industry and thrift; and the commercial code had compelled the best Irish manufacturers to emigrate, if they were not to starve at home.’ ‘The lord,’ wrote Sir Robert Kane in 1844, ‘was above industry; the slave was below it; and hence, though the circumstances of a fertile soil, easy access to markets, and abundance of motive power, were, in themselves, favourable, the blessings which nature presented were unutilised, by the ignorance and inertness of the people.’²

This sentence suggests a wholly different reason for the industrial decay of the South of Ireland, namely, that it was not the Act of Union, but the temperament of the southern Irish, to whatever causes due—climate, race, the oppressions of the past—that was the root cause of the trouble. The Union may have deprived certain struggling Irish industries

¹ George O’Brien, *op. cit.* (1921).

² *The Industrial Resources of Ireland* (1844).

of the artificial props which maintained them in a precarious existence, but it is very doubtful whether they would have survived even had the Act not been passed ; for in any case the industrial revolution, already far advanced in Great Britain, would have operated to the disadvantage of the antiquated methods of Irish industry. Even those who would lay the blame on the Union admit, for instance, that hand-weaving was doomed ; that where the new processes were adopted, i.e. in north-east Ulster, the weaving industry increased ; and that wherever the new processes were not adopted it ceased to be. If the new industry of distilling flourished, it was because of ' improved processes introduced by Scottish distillers settled in Ireland.' Nor can want of capital alone be pleaded in excuse for the failure of old-established businesses ; for where there are going concerns under capable management they can always obtain capital. If the southern manufacturer succumbed, it was often not for lack of opportunity, but because of the ' ignorance and inertness ' that made him cling to outworn methods through sheer dislike of taking trouble. This was the opinion of the late Father Walter MacDonald, of Maynooth, based on the experience of a long life spent in southern Ireland.

In Kilkenny, for instance, which I know best, there had been a considerable manufacture of woollens, starch, and leather ; but the manufacturers continued to use old-world machines and methods ; with the result that they were beaten in competition. The woollen mills, moreover, depended wholly on the water-power of the Nore, which, of a dry season, may be little more than a trickle, for weeks at a time. Ten miles away, at Castlecomer, they had some of the finest steam coal in the world, but they lacked the brains, or the spirit, to turn it to account. Is it any wonder that they went down ?

When anyone tells me that the Union is responsible for the non-development, or even the decay, of Irish industries, I am wont to ask him, please, to tell me what law was passed, or not passed, by the Imperial Parliament to keep the Suir from being as great a centre of industry as the Lagan ; and I never heard of any. There—in the Suir—we have a noble river ; tidal from the Tower of Hook to Carrick—a stretch of thirty miles or more ; with the Barrow running northwards, no less and fine tidal, for twelve other miles. The two are as near to the coal and iron of Wales as is Belfast to those of Scotland ; why is

not Waterford another Belfast ? Why did the Vulcan Foundry, the Graving Dock, and the glass industry fail ? Because, I suppose, they were not dry-nursed from the public exchequer ; as if Harland and Wolff's, or Goodbody's jute works, or Jacob's biscuit factory, were fostered in that way.

The fact is, I fear, that we Gaels have not the business turn of mind, and so do not build factories even now, anywhere : on the banks of the Hudson or Mississippi any more than on the Suir or the Liffey.¹

This unbusiness-like, happy-go-lucky temper of the southern Irish may be due to their Gaelic blood ; it may be due to the soft and enervating climate ; but it is certainly also in part due to a factor which has played a disproportionate part in moulding their character—this is the factor of religion. Long ago, Sir Horace Plunkett pointed out the great part played by this in determining the economic fortunes of the two divisions of the country :

Protestantism has its stronghold in the great industrial centres of the north and among the Presbyterian farmers of five or six Ulster counties. The communities have developed the essentially strenuous qualities which, no doubt, they brought from England and Scotland. In city life, their thrift, industry and enterprise . . . have built up a world-wide commerce. In rural life they have drawn the largest yield from relatively unfertile soil.

Roman Catholicism strikes an outsider as being in some of its tendencies non-economic, if not actually anti-economic. These tendencies have, of course, fuller play when they act on a people whose education has been retarded or stunted. . . . The reliance of that religion on authority, its repression of individuality, and its complete shifting of what I may call the human centre of gravity to a future existence . . . appear to me calculated, unless supplemented by other influences, to check the growth of the qualities of initiative and self-reliance, especially among a people whose lack of education unfits them for resisting the influence of what may present itself to such minds as a kind of fatalism with resignation as its paramount virtue.²

To say that a religion is uneconomic is, of course, not to condemn it as false ; for, as Cardinal Newman pointed out long ago, the test of true Christianity is certainly not

¹ *Op. cit.* The Goodbodys and Jacobs are Quaker families.

² *Ireland in the New Century* (1904).

material prosperity. But the precept: 'Take no thought for the morrow' is certainly uneconomic, and the command: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth,' if conscientiously obeyed, would prevent the accumulation of capital and so hinder industrial development. In view of the devout habit of mind of the Catholic Irish, then, we are justified in looking somewhat closely into the argument that Irish industries in the South decayed because the land system made the accumulation of capital impossible. In doing so we stumble at once upon a contradiction. For the same authorities that tell us that it was impossible to accumulate capital inform us that Catholics amassed large fortunes as graziers, as merchants in the towns, and as usurers in the country.¹ What, then, became of these 'large fortunes'? Usually, we are told, they were invested in land. But there was another form of investment, not of this world, which absorbed a disproportionate amount of the people's savings. Sir Horace Plunkett says:

It is not alone extravagant church-building which, in a country so backward as Ireland, shocks the economic sense. The multiplication—in inverse ratio to a declining population—of costly and elaborate monastic and conventual institutions, involving what in the aggregate must be an enormous annual expenditure for maintenance, is difficult to reconcile with the known conditions of the country.²

This was written some twenty years ago. But nearly sixty years earlier Martin wrote, as a striking proof of the prosperity brought by the Union:

At the period of the Union there was but one respectable Roman Catholic chapel in Dublin—now there are twelve handsome chapels, one of which cost £40,000 for its erection. Throughout Ireland we everywhere find noble structures raised by our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, equally indicative of their piety and their augmenting wealth.³

For over a hundred years, then, these 'noble structures'—cathedrals, parish churches, monasteries, nunneries—have been springing up all over Ireland, and, speaking from the strictly commercial point of view, the amount of capital locked up in them must be immense. If, then, Catholic

¹ O'Brien, *op. cit.*

² *Op. cit.* p. 108.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 41.

Ireland suffered from want of capital for industrial development, it is permissible for the outsider to look for the cause elsewhere than in the Union or in the after-effects of old wrongs which had long been righted. It may have been at least partly due to the neglect of the service of Mammon for the service of God, the assured rewards of which are not gathered in this world. To serve both God and Mammon effectively is stated on the highest authority to be impossible.

If we turn from the economic to the political grievances of Ireland under the Union, it is even more clear that, if the arrangement did not work well, the blame cannot be laid upon one partner alone. The union with Scotland had been far more fiercely resisted by the Scots in its inception than that with Ireland was resisted by the Irish; yet it has worked smoothly and well, and there is no serious movement for its repeal. Once passed, Scotland accepted it and soon found out how to use it for her own best advantage. It was Englishmen, not Scotsmen, who at the outset complained of its results, and their complaints died down as they realised that Scotland had become a loyal member of the Empire. Had the Irish members, instead of holding together as a national group, thrown themselves into the common life of the United Kingdom, the effect of the Union might have been as happy as in the case of Scotland. Their refusal to do so destroyed this possibility. If Irish politicians, instead of following Grattan's advice to 'keep on hammering at the Union,' had consented to take office, the economic and other ills of Ireland would have been remedied much earlier than they were. Resistance to reforms in Ireland was never due to any malice on the part of the Imperial Parliament, but to fear lest concessions should endanger the Empire by weakening those elements in Ireland which were believed to be barriers against the forces of disruption. In spite of this fear, which was certainly not without justification, institutions once regarded as essential to the security of the State, but passionately resented by the Irish as oppressive, were one by one abolished or reformed, until, at the close of the nineteenth century, with the extension of the English system of local government to Ireland, the two islands were in the enjoyment of the same general liberties. To speak of Ireland

twenty years ago as though her condition was like that of Poland under the Russians is sheer nonsense. There was never a country in the world where the individual had more liberty ; there was no country in the world—not even excepting England—where more was being done to right the admitted wrongs of the labouring people. There was no country in the world where the growth of wealth, and of the contentment that comes with wealth, was more rapid. How this process was stopped, and Ireland turned from a state of pastoral peace into one of anarchy and bloodshed, it is the purpose of the following pages to tell.

CHAPTER I

THE INCUBATION OF REVOLT

Ireland at peace—The Liberal victory of 1906—Suspension of the Arms Act—Mr. Birrell Chief Secretary—Land Act of 1909—Agrarian problem revived—Renewed Home Rule agitation—Split among the Nationalists—Redmondites and O'Brienites—Resurgence of religious antagonisms—Organisation of Irish labour—The beginnings of Sinn Féin—Arthur Griffith and the 'Resurrection of Hungary'—The Gaelic League—Land agitation renewed—The All-for-Ireland League—Redmond in America—Protests of the Protestant North.

EARLY in 1906 the long tenure of office by the Unionists at Westminster ended, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became the head of a Liberal Government which commanded an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. The change promised to be a fateful one for Ireland. For twenty years she had been governed by men who, in the opinion of those now in power, misunderstood the nature of her true needs and were out of sympathy with her just aspirations. She was now to be ruled by politicians committed to the principle of Home Rule and, pending its achievement, determined to attune their methods to what they thought to be Irish ideas. At the outset, indeed, the new men paid a perhaps unconscious tribute to the effectiveness of the policy they were pledged to reverse. Speaking of Ireland in the House of Commons on 21 February 1906, Mr. James Bryce, the new Chief Secretary, said: 'This is a moment of tranquillity, of peace, and of comparatively well settled order.' A little more than a year later, at Halifax on 26 April 1907, his successor, Mr. Augustine Birrell, repeated this in stronger language. 'You may take my word for it,' he said, 'that Ireland is at this moment in a more peaceful condition than she has been in for the last six hundred years.'

Encouraged by this atmosphere of calm, and as an earnest of their good will towards their Nationalist allies, the Government in 1907 made a departure which was

destined to have terrible consequences. In 1881, under Gladstone's administration, had been passed the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Act, which gave the Government complete control of the importation, sale, and carrying of arms, and this had since been renewed every three years. At the instance of John Redmond, leader of the Irish Nationalists, it was now allowed to lapse. Everyone was thenceforth free to buy and to carry arms in Ireland, subject only to the nominal restrictions imposed by the ordinary law. It is said that Redmond himself, who had never expected his heroics to be taken seriously, was aghast at his success. It was not the first nor the last time that Irish politicians have been led into a trap by the incurable incapacity of the English to understand that Irishmen only sometimes mean what they say, or at least, often say a great deal more than they mean.

In spite of this folly, the bloody fruits of which were to be garnered later, Ireland remained for a while at peace. The reasons are not far to seek. Political agitation in Ireland, as elsewhere, whatever sentiment may lie behind it, has always derived its main driving force from the real or imaginary economic grievances of the mass of the people, and it has always died down in proportion to the removal of these grievances. This was well understood by the notable succession of Chief Secretaries who ruled Ireland from Mr. Arthur Balfour onward. The orgy of crime and violence which accompanied the campaign organised by the Land League made it necessary in 1887 to strengthen the hands of the Government by passing the Criminal Law and Procedure (Ireland) Act, commonly known as the Crimes Act. But it was recognised that behind this agitation there were real grievances which to a certain extent justified it, and that the only true cure for the unrest was to remove its causes. Gladstone's Fair Rent Act of 1881 and Land Purchase Act of 1885, though too timidly conceived, had had some good effect. The Unionist Government launched a bolder scheme which, had it been possible to carry it through as projected, might have rescued Ireland from the sea of troubles that lay ahead. As it was, the Land Purchase Act of 1903, for which Mr. George Wyndham was responsible as Chief Secretary, seemed for the first time

to promise a final solution of the agrarian problem by making possible the conversion, on a really large scale, of the tenant cultivators into peasant proprietors. In the six years between 1903 and 1909 some 287,000 tenants agreed, under this Act, to become purchasers of their holdings on terms advantageous to themselves and satisfactory to the owners. Ireland was during this period, to all seeming, prosperous, peaceful, and contented.¹

Had land purchase continued without interruption, it is possible that contentment would also have continued. Unhappily, in 1909 it became clear that the financial basis of the Wyndham Act had broken down. Under this Act the cash payable to the landowner was to be provided by the issue of a sufficient amount of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. stock; and if, owing to this being at a discount, it became necessary to issue stock in excess of the nominal purchase money, the dividends on the excess stock were to be met by the Guarantee Fund, meaning in the result the ratepayers of the Irish counties. In 1909 it was plainly seen that the charge for the necessary excess stock would reduce the ratepayers to bankruptcy, and the Government was forced to take action. The result was Mr. Birrell's Land Purchase Act of 1909. This provided that the general taxpayer of the United Kingdom should take over, in relief of the Irish ratepayer, the liability already incurred for excess stock, and that, so far as future purchase agreements were concerned, vendors should be paid in 3 per cent. stock of the face value of the purchase money. Unfortunately, this 3 per cent. stock immediately fell below par, and continued to fall in later years. Owners would not take this depreciated stock in payment for their properties, with the result that land purchase practically came to a standstill, while at least a third of the country remained unsold.

It is possible, of course, that the complete carrying out of the policy of land purchase would not have had all the good effects expected. It is true that under the Land Acts, and as a result of the Government's housing schemes, the lot of the Irish peasants improved immeasurably. Gone were the picturesque and filthy hovels which they had once shared with their pigs, replaced now for

¹ See W. F. Bailey, *The Irish Land Acts* (1917).

the most part by decent cottages which made possible a higher standard of living. Those of the tenants who purchased even became rich; for the small annual instalments of purchase money which they had to pay were fixed before the outbreak of war in 1914, and the immense rise in the prices of agricultural products afterwards brought them disproportionate profits. It is true also that the new prosperity had the natural effect of allaying the old discontent and restlessness, at least for a time. 'The people who have purchased,' reported a County Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1914, 'are law-abiding and loyal.' But though the old Irish agrarian problem arising out of the vicious system of land tenure had thus been largely solved since the passing of the Wyndham Act, it may be doubted whether even the completion of land purchase would have brought permanent peace to the countryside, since in all Ireland there is not enough land to provide economic holdings for all who desire them.¹ As it was, the old problem was no sooner by way of being solved than a new one arose owing to the rapid increase of the class of 'landless men,' the sons of the prolific race of small farmers. Before the war some 30,000 of these young people had emigrated every year; but after 1914 this safety-valve was closed, first as a result of the war itself, and later by the action of the Sinn Fein organisation, which sets its face against what it denounced as the 'depopulation of Ireland.' The problem presented by this accumulation in the country of a mass of young men, without work, without money, and without prospects, was destined to be a fateful one.

It was rendered yet more serious by the general conditions of labour in Ireland. The Land Acts had improved the fortunes of the occupiers, but not those of the agricultural labourers, who had now to deal with a generation of close-fisted peasant proprietors, instead of the easy-going, open-handed squires of the old order, and had as yet no organisation to help them in their bargaining. The lot of the town labourers was even worse. Outside

¹ 'Even if all the land in Ireland were available for redistribution in equal shares, the higher standard of comfort to which it is essential that the condition of our people should be raised would forbid the existence of much more than half a million peasant proprietors' (Sir Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century*, 1904, p. 50).

Belfast and a few smaller towns in the north, there were few manufactures in Ireland and little employment in the towns save in transport services, while wages were low and unemployment was chronic. This want of manufactures, and therefore of work for the labourers, was widely attributed in Ireland to the selfish trade policy of Great Britain, and it is easy to see therefore how the revolutionary elements fostered by the often appalling conditions in the cities gained a host of recruits throughout the country.

Another and even more fateful influence began to operate in 1910—namely, the re-opening of the Home Rule question. Its revival was due to the result of the general election, which by leaving the Unionist and Liberal parties almost equally balanced in the House of Commons made it clear that the Irish Nationalists, under the leadership of John Redmond, would hold the scales of power, and that Mr. Asquith's Government could only survive by coming to terms with them. It was in these untoward circumstances that Home Rule, which had been kept in the background by the Liberal Government so long as it commanded an unchallenged parliamentary majority, became once more a plank in the Liberal platform. In vain the spokesmen of the Government asseverated that this plank had never been abandoned, and that the electors in 1906 had had ample warning that the return of the Liberal party to power would mean Home Rule for Ireland. The world—and not least the Irish world—saw in the revival of this policy, after four years of silence, the price paid for Irish co-operation in the attack on the House of Lords and in the forcing through of the 'people's budget.' A bargain struck in these circumstances could hardly be expected to produce a true 'union of hearts,' and the immediate effect in Ireland was no more than to revive the prestige of the Nationalist party, which had suffered during the dull years of comparative contentment, and to give a fresh impulse to political agitation.

That the nature and goal of this agitation were little understood outside Ireland was abundantly proved later during the debates on the new Government of Ireland Bill inside and outside Parliament. The issues, indeed, were from the first obscured by dissensions among the

Nationalists themselves. Some years earlier Mr. William Martin Murphy, who occupied a commanding position in the industrial life of Dublin, had quarrelled with the official Nationalists and, in order to attack their policy with effect, had founded the *Irish Independent*, an ably edited daily paper which soon succeeded in supplanting the Nationalist organ, the *Freeman's Journal*, in popular favour. It was largely under his influence that, on the eve of the general election, the unity of the Nationalist party was broken by the secession of Mr. William O'Brien. He stated his reasons for this secession in the first number of the *Cork Accent*, published on 1 January 1910. 'Ireland is passing through a grave crisis,' he said. 'She is being plundered by the Radical Government¹ and gagged by the Molly Maguires.² The present Government has carried out Mr. Dillon's wishes, and killed land purchase in Ireland, thus robbing the country of the fruits of thirty years' agitation. It was only a knave would make, or a fool believe, the assertion that Home Rule was to be passed when the Lords' veto was abolished. Under the rule of the Molly Maguires no Protestant could be admitted into the National movement, be a member of a public board or a public contractor, obtain a position in the gift of a public body, or even get the Catholics' custom in his shop; and that section would either be starved out of existence or out of the country.' It was a protest against the old policy of keeping agrarian discontent alive, at the expense of the peasantry, in order to serve as a lever for political upheavals; against the domination of the Ancient Order of Hibernians with its narrow spirit of sectarian exclusiveness; and against the parliamentary tactics of Redmond and Dillon, whom he accused of selling the Irish vote to the Radical party—an accusation which was later to be repeated, with fatal force, by the Sinn Feiners. The secession at once gained notable, though not very numerous, adherents, and on 11 February a public meeting was held at Cork, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor, for the purpose of founding a new Independent Nationalist daily newspaper, the *Cork Free Press*.

¹ This refers to the Finance Act.

² The Ancient Order of Hibernians.

In the results of the elections in Ireland the effects of the Liberal-Nationalist alliance were significantly apparent: eleven 'Independent Nationalists' were returned, among them being Mr. Timothy Healy (N. Louth), and in the Protestant North, once the stronghold of Radicalism, only one Liberal, Mr. Redmond Barry, held his seat—in the predominantly Catholic constituency of North Tyrone. Ulster—or, rather, the solid Protestant block of the 'six counties'—stood revealed as unalterably opposed to Nationalism, and determined to preserve a status which it believed to be essential to its religious liberties and its commercial and industrial prosperity. And behind the opposing Parliamentary forces thus arrayed for the coming struggle there remained, sinister and menacing, the great political organisations which Ireland inherited from her troubled past—in Ulster the Orangemen, fiercely Protestant in spirit, who formed the backbone of the Unionist resistance; behind the Nationalists, the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the latter exclusively Catholic and strong in its affiliation with the same order in the United States; and, last but not least, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, contemptuous of party alliances and constitutional methods.¹

Thus, while in England Home Rule was being debated as a mere problem in local self-government, in Ireland the revival of the question emphasised once more the cleavage in the nation, Protestant and Catholic standing ranged against each other, as they had stood since the sixteenth century, marking 'the contrast not only of two creeds, but of two breeds, of two ways of thinking, of two ways of looking at all the most vital interests of men.'² English politicians were proposing to legislate in the spirit of the twentieth century for a country which industrially was 'just early nineteenth century' and 'in religious matters had not yet emerged from the seventeenth';³ for in 1910, and later, it was still true that 'religion is the touchstone by which every Irishman is

¹ For this and other Irish secret societies see H. B. C. Pollard, *The Secret Societies of Ireland* (1922).

² Dr. Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College, in the Convention, 1917.

³ 'Dogmatism in Irish Life,' by Ernest A. Boyd (*Irish Review*, 1913, p. 241).

tested,'¹ and that creed marked the line of cleavage in everything that made for national sentiment. This is the fundamental fact which must be grasped, if the root cause of many of the subsequent troubles is to be understood.

There were in 1910, however, other organised forces at work in Ireland, which were destined to cut across the traditional lines of political and religious cleavage. At this time the labour movement became organised with the foundation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, under the leadership of James Larkin, a fiery and somewhat irresponsible demagogue, and James Connolly, a man of genius and character who had founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party in 1896 and in 1910 returned from America inspired with a burning resentment at the intolerable condition of life to which Irish working people were too often subjected. This Labour movement, of which the centre was established at Liberty Hall in Dublin, also threw itself into opposition to the official Nationalists, its spokesmen pointing out that it was precisely influential Nationalist members of the Dublin corporation who were responsible for the condition of the city slums by which they profited, and that from the point of view of Labour there was nothing to choose between the dominant political parties. Equally opposed to the official Nationalists was another organisation which, among other and very divergent objects, also aimed at the general improvement of social and industrial conditions in Ireland—the association known as Sinn Féin (Ourselves alone). As a political organisation this had first taken shape in 1905. The ground had, however, already been prepared for it. The centenary of the rebellion of 1798 had been made the occasion for reviving interest in past separatist movements; '98 clubs had been founded to keep this interest alive; and the younger writers, finding little inspiration for their dithyrambic muse in the prosaic prosperity which Ireland was beginning to enjoy under the Land Acts and other 'British' legislation, welcomed a theme so admirably suited to their native genius. In 1899, moreover, a clearer and more serious direction had been given to these tendencies by the establishment of the *United Irishman*

¹ Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

under the able editorship of Arthur Griffith. The very name of this paper was in itself a programme; for it was that of the journal in which, in the 'forties, John Mitchell had advocated, as the surest means for dissolving the hated Union, the threefold policy of Parliamentary obstruction, 'systematic opposition to and contempt of law . . . so as virtually to supersede English dominion,' and open rebellion 'in the event of a European war.' Griffith himself was not in favour of violent methods, though the resort to violence was implicit in the 'passive resistance' which he advocated. Nor was he, openly at least, a Republican, but advocated the restoration of the Constitution of 1782 as the legal foundation of the Irish claim to nationhood. None the less Republicanism was equally implicit in the ideal proclaimed in the first number of the *United Irishman*—namely, 'the Nationalism of '98, '48 and '67 as the true Nationalism and Grattan's cry "Live Ireland—Perish the Empire!" as the watch-word of patriotism.'

The *United Irishman*, in spite of frequent suppression by the Government, perished in 1906 for lack of public support, but in its death-throes it had given birth to Sinn Fein, of which Arthur Griffith was the inspirer and founder.

The Sinn Fein organisation was still in its weak beginnings in 1910; it was quiescent during the elections; but it was, none the less, carrying on an ominous activity behind the scenes. Its members, recruited mainly from the ranks of the young 'intellectuals,' scorned the opportunism of the official Nationalists, gloried in upholding the tradition of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, and openly avowed their intention of establishing an independent Irish Republic, an ideal first proclaimed in their organ *Irish Freedom* in 1910. At this time, indeed, they still advocated none but peaceful methods. They were, however, already planning to carry out the policy first elaborated by Arthur Griffith in the *United Irishman*—namely, that of using against 'British rule' in Ireland the methods of passive resistance which had been successfully used against Austrian rule in Hungary.¹ In their

¹ See 'The Regeneration of Hungary' (1904), which originally appeared as a series of articles in the *United Irishman*. It is said to have been inspired by Professor Kuno Meyer.

annual congress, held on the 29th September, they proposed to make fresh efforts to secure the withdrawal of the Irish members from the Parliament at Westminster. These efforts were unsuccessful. But, though the politicians ignored them, their ardent nationalism was already a force to be reckoned with. It was based, indeed, upon a reckless idealisation of Ireland's past, present and future; but it appealed to many of the better elements in the country, less owing to its defiance of 'British tyranny'—which existed now only in its vivid imagination—than in its insistence on the need for cultivating in the Irish people the spirit of self-reliance, as opposed to the bad tradition of always looking abroad for assistance, and to its revolt against the corrupt methods of the Nationalist organisation, with its local 'bosses' and rings, its monstrous jobberies, and its reliance on the support of the publicans and 'gombeen men.'¹

Less popular in its appeal, but yet of great political significance, was the enthusiasm of the Sinn Feiners for the revival of the Irish (Gaelic) language and a specifically Irish learning and culture. The Gaelic League (*Cumann na nGaedhael*), founded in 1893 for the promotion of these objects, was not as yet indeed identified with the Sinn Fein separatist movement; but an important step seemed to have been taken towards the realisation of the Sinn Fein ideal when, in September 1910, the Senate of the new National University decided that a knowledge of Gaelic should be required of all candidates for matriculation from 1913 onwards.²

Meanwhile, on the surface of Irish history during 1910 the most conspicuous happenings were connected with the renewal of land agitation, the battle of the factions

¹ M. Paul-Dubois, in his *Contemporary Ireland* (1908), called attention to the good effects of the Bill of 1898 which set up in Ireland the British system of democratic local government. He adds, however: 'Even at the present time there is a tendency to corner offices and even contracts for members of this or that political league; the custom of *combinazione* is widely diffused; everybody is on the scent for places for his friends and relatives; and the reign of rings and bosses seems to be opening.' It was.

² Except among the Sinn Fein *intelligentsia* of the towns, the number of Gaelic-speaking people has continued to decline. See Dr. Douglas Hyde, *s.v.* 'Ireland' in *Enc. Brit.* 12th ed. (1921), vol. 32. One of the first acts of the Irish Provisional Government in 1922 was to make the intensive study of Gaelic compulsory in the teachers' training colleges.

within the Nationalist ranks, and the marshalling of the forces for and against the Union in view of the imminence of a Home Rule Bill. The policy of violence for securing the distribution of land had been deliberately reaffirmed by the United Irish League on 28 November 1909, two days after the passing of the Land Act; and since, in pursuit of its policy of conciliation, the Liberal Government had not only allowed the Arms Act to lapse, but had suspended all 'coercive' legislation and reduced the forces of the constabulary, it proved quite incapable of coping with an organised campaign of outrage. At the meeting of the League in Dublin Mr. Denis Johnston, a member of the Directory, said that 'the people should make up their minds to put a ring of fire round every land grabber and grazier in the country and tell them to quit,' and under the auspices of the League, throughout the year, cases of boycotting, cattle 'driving,' cattle maiming, firing into dwelling-houses, and the like, continued in various counties. The conditions in this respect were not so bad as in the days of the Land League; but they were bad enough, and they had less excuse.

Meanwhile the struggle between the rival Nationalist factions was a bitter one. At Kilcommon, near Ballimore, on 21 March, the fighting between them was so severe—even revolver shots being exchanged—that the constabulary had to intervene, and violent disturbance of public meetings by one party or the other was frequent. In such circumstances the declared policy of the All-for-Ireland League, started by Mr. William O'Brien in Cork city on 31 March, seemed like irony. It aimed at 'a combination of all the elements of the Irish population in a spirit of mutual tolerance and patriotic good will,' at guaranteeing the rights of the Protestants, winning the friendship of the British people, and disarming the prejudices of Irish Unionists against Home Rule.' It was significant of later developments that, in putting forward this programme, Mr. O'Brien had the support of many well-known Irish Constitutionalists, as well as of many Nationalists.¹

In general, however, Irish Unionists were less impressed

¹ A letter from the Earl of Dunraven, approving the movement, was read at the inaugural meeting.

by Mr. O'Brien's conciliatory rhetoric than by the fact that the Redmondite party had been carried to victory on the cry of 'Up the Mollies!','¹ and by the aims of the Nationalist leaders as avowed in their more candid moments. The Robert Emmet celebration early in March, conducted simultaneously in New York and Dublin, seemed to emphasise the true aim of the Nationalist movement. In New York 'the men behind Redmond' were hailed as the worthy successors of Robert Emmet and aid was invited for the Members of Parliament who were 'working for independence through legislation.'² In Dublin a republican orator, Mr. Bulmer Hobson, declared that 'they had not in readiness any means to knock down any English Dreadnought, but the Germans might do it for them': and the sentiment was applauded.³ The impression made by these demonstrations was strengthened as a result of the visit of Irish leaders to America, in the autumn, for the purpose of collecting campaign funds. Messrs. Redmond, Devlin and Boyle left Ireland on the 18th of September for the United States, while Mr. T. P. O'Connor went on a similar mission to Canada. The key of their speeches was tuned to suit their audiences. Mr. O'Connor, who had the support of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Canadian Liberals, was studiously moderate; Mr. Redmond, who found himself fraternising with that redoubtable patriot Patrick Ford—ex-dynamiter, and editor of the *Irish World*—occasionally fell or was forced into an extremer strain, and Unionists duly noted the following passage from a speech delivered by him at the Buffalo Convention:

Without freedom, all these great concessions [Land Acts etc.,] are practically valueless, or at any rate such value as they do possess is to be found in the fact that they strengthen the aim of the Irish people to push on to the great goal of national independence. . . . I have come here to-day to America to ask you to give us your aid in a supreme and, I believe, a final effort to dethrone once and for all the English Government of our country.⁴

¹ Mr. William O'Brien explained this as meaning 'boycott of Protestants.' In Ireland 'Unionist' and 'Protestant' were practically synonymous terms, though many better class Catholics were Unionists and some Protestants Nationalists.

² *Freeman's Journal*, March 1910.

³ *Ibid.* March 8.

⁴ *Irish World*, Oct. 8, 1910.

In spite of this apparently unequivocal utterance—the true point of which depends, of course, on what was meant by ‘national independence’—Mr. Redmond was loudly accused in Ireland, notably by the Sinn Feiners, of ‘lowering the flag,’ a charge which, after his triumphant return on the 12th November with a fund of \$200,000, he proceeded to rebut. Thus at Tipperary on the 13th he referred to the ‘ridiculous rumour’ that he had lowered the flag, and at Waterford, on the 27th, he defined his demands for Ireland as a Parliament elected by the Irish people, with an executive responsible to it, and with full control of purely Irish affairs. This definition of ‘independence’ only increased the wrath of the extremists; Unionists, on the other hand, while they recognised Redmond’s good faith, failed to be convinced by his asseveration that under Home Rule there would be no ‘persecution of Protestants.’ In Dublin, on 26 November, a great meeting of Irish Unionists recorded their unalterable opposition to Home Rule in any form. Two days later another great meeting in Belfast uttered a more ominous note, the threat being made that no taxes would be paid to a Home Rule Parliament, and that any attempt to force Nationalist government on Ulster might meet with armed resistance. Thus the year 1910 ended with the first rumblings of the storm to come.

CHAPTER II

THE ARMING OF IRELAND

Anti-British demonstrations—The Coronation celebrations—Visit of the King and Queen to Dublin—Mr. Redmond's 'Imperialism' denounced—His 'two voices'—Unionist demonstrations in Ulster—Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster resistance—Mr. Arthur Balfour on Home Rule—Mr. Bonar Law on safeguards for minorities—Parliament and the Irish Question—Attitude of the Nationalists towards the Home Rule Bill—Declaration by Patrick Pearse—Question of the partition of Ireland raised—The Ulster Covenant—Sectarian fights—Ulster organises resistance—Sinn Fein and German assistance—The Ulster Volunteers—The National Volunteers—The great strike in Dublin—The Citizen Army—The Government and the Volunteers—The Arms Proclamation—Suggestions for compromising the Ulster question—Military measures against Ulster—The Curragh incident—The Larne gun-running—Redmond gains control of the National Volunteers—Secession of the Irish Volunteers—The Amending Bill—Buckingham Palace conference—The Howth gun-running and the Bachelor's Walk 'massacre'—Patrick Pearse on the situation.

THE year 1911 was, on the whole, uneventful in Ireland. Agrarian unrest continued, with sporadic cases of cattle-driving, boycotting, shooting and bomb outrages, and incendiarism; and in many instances, owing to the intimidation of witnesses, the Crown was unable to bring the perpetrators to justice.¹ The flood of eloquence let loose by the Home Rule proposals also continued, but only a few of the utterances of the rival orators are notable in the light of later events. At Wexford, in January, a demonstration of the Gaelic Athletic Association was held, under the presidency of the mayor, at which the association was definitely advertised as a rebel organisation. 'It is an organisation,' said one speaker, 'to keep the bone and muscle of our country from donning the red coat or the black coat of England (i.e. from enlisting in the army or the Royal Irish Constabulary). . . . We want our men to be physically strong, and when the time

¹ See, e.g., the charge of Mr. Justice Madden to the Grand Jury of Galway (*Freeman's Journal*, 2 March 1911).

comes the hurlers will cast away the *camán* for the sharp, bright steel that will drive the Saxon from our land.'¹ Demonstrations were also organised against the celebrations connected with the coronation of King George V and the subsequent visit of the King and Queen to Dublin. On Coronation Day (22 June), which for the rest was celebrated by all classes in Ireland with much festivity, a meeting at the Customs House in Dublin was addressed by John Devoy, Countess Markievicz, and others in terms of violent denunciation, and the preparations made for the reception of the King and Queen were met by a formal protest on the part of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which declined 'to identify itself with the wretched compromise sought to be effected by the misguided section of our fellow-countrymen who seek to sacrifice the great national principle of Ireland as a nation by the slavish adulation of a foreign monarch.'² This protest was re-echoed in a resolution passed by a meeting of the Sinn Féin association. The royal visit was, none the less, a great success, the King and Queen receiving a warm welcome from the people of Dublin.

John Redmond, speaking at Woodford in Essex, had indeed emphasised the loyalty of the Nationalists to the Crown and Empire, and had been duly denounced by the Sinn Féin monthly, *Irish Freedom*, for betraying Irish Nationalism and indulging in 'an orgy of Imperialism.' The attitude of the official Nationalists throughout the year was, in truth, equivocal, divided as they were between the task of converting the English people to the principle of Home Rule and that of persuading their own more exuberant followers of their faithfulness to unadulterated Nationalism. The irreconcilable nature of the 'two voices' was accentuated during October. On the 1st of the month Redmond delivered an oration at the unveiling of the fine statue of Parnell, by the American sculptor Saint Gaudens, which stands at the head of O'Connell Street in Dublin. It was noted that he made no reference to the uncompromising assertion of national

¹ *Wicklow People*, 21 Jan. 1911. The reference is to the national game of hurling. The *camán* is a sort of hockey-stick, sometimes weighted with metal.

² Dublin papers, 12 June.

rights engraved on its pedestal.¹ Five days later he was assuring the people of Manchester that the demand of the Nationalists was not for a co-ordinate Parliament, but one subordinate to the Imperial Parliament.

In view of this confusion of voices in the South, it is perhaps not surprising that the mood of the Protestant North tended to harden against all efforts at compromise; and this mood was at the moment still further embittered by attempts on the part of certain of the Roman Catholic clergy to enforce the logical consequences of the *Ne temere* decree of Pope Pius X in the case of 'mixed marriages' already contracted. The 12th of July celebrations in Ulster, however, passed off quietly, and a great meeting on 12th August at Londonderry did no more than emphasise the moral of the successful defence of the city as applied to the present perils. On the 21st, however, a meeting of Presbyterians was held in the same place, and in this a stronger note of defiance was sounded, one minister declaring that a Home Rule Bill forced through the House of Lords would be resisted in arms.² This unyielding temper was illustrated more especially by the great Unionist demonstration at Craigavon, near Belfast, on the 23rd September, at which a hundred thousand people were present. In an impassioned speech Sir Edward Carson, who was now recognised as the Ulster leader, protested against the 'base betrayal' of the Irish loyalists contemplated by the Liberal Government. 'I know,' he said, 'that force has been used to compel retention to government against the will of the people. But a precedent has yet to be created to drive out by force loyal and contented citizens from a community to which by birth they belong.' The refusal of Mr. Asquith to allow them to put their case before the British electors had driven them in the ultimate result to rely upon their own strength, and to organise all their forces to carry out the cardinal tenet of their faith—that never, under any circumstances, would they submit to Home Rule, that is to say, to the administration of the kind of men who

¹ 'No man has the right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation. No man has the right to say to this country—Thus far shalt thou go and no further. We have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nationhood, and we never shall.'

² *Notes from Ireland* (1911), p. 78.

would dominate a Nationalist Parliament in Dublin.¹ At the same meeting an address was presented, signed by a thousand Ulster business men, pointing out the disastrous effects to Ulster industry of any separation from Great Britain; and on the following Monday, as a result of the mandate given by the great mass meeting, a conference at Belfast of delegates from Orange Lodges, Unionist Clubs, and the Ulster Unionist Council resolved to frame a Constitution for Ulster and to set up a Provisional Government, should the Home Rule Bill become law.

The imminence of the introduction of the new Government of Ireland Bill increased the agitation in the country at the opening of 1912, and especially in the North of Ireland. On 5 January a meeting of Southern Unionists at Omagh, in Tyrone, was addressed by Sir Edward Carson, who defended his attitude as leader of the Ulster resistance. He was, he said, a rebel in the sense that he desired to remain under the King and the Imperial Parliament and was prepared to face a charge on that issue. On the 16th the Ulster Unionist Council decided not to allow Mr. Winston Churchill to address a meeting in Ulster Hall, Belfast, in favour of Home Rule. The meeting, however, took place on 8 February, in a tent specially erected for the purpose on ground belonging to a Nationalist football club, and passed off without disaster, Mr. Churchill explaining 'that any plan for Home Rule put forward would be an integral part of Parliamentary devolution, and would not be inconsistent with the design of the ultimate federation of the Empire.' The realities of the situation were, however, more clearly revealed, even to the most sanguine of Constitution-mongers, by the great demonstration of Unionists held on Easter Tuesday at Balmoral, Belfast, and presided over by Dr. Crozier, the Protestant Primate of All Ireland. From the temper of this assembly it was clear that, as Mr. Bonar Law put it, 'Ireland is not a nation, but two peoples separated by a deeper gulf than that dividing Ireland from Great Britain.'

The same moral was drawn by Sir Edward Carson in his speech during the debate on the introduction of the Home Rule Bill on 11 April. The dividing line

¹ *Notes from Ireland* (1911), p. 84.

in Ireland, he said, was between Catholic and Protestant, and any argument for Home Rule for Ireland applied with equal force to Home Rule for the Protestant North. Mr. Asquith, on the other hand, declared it to be 'impossible to concede the demand of a small minority to veto the verdict of the Irish nation'; but in the adjourned debate on the 15th Mr. Balfour exposed the fallacy underlying this statement. The United Kingdom, he said, should be treated as a whole: 'if Ireland is a nation, what right has Great Britain to supremacy?' As for 'safeguards' for minorities, which John Redmond was willing to concede in liberal measure, Mr. Bonar Law pointed out that these would be valueless, since, whatever powers were reserved to the Imperial Parliament, experience had proved that one democratic Parliament cannot control another.

The debates on the Bill in the House and in the country showed, indeed, an extraordinary confusion of mind in British legislators as to the Irish demand. There was talk of devolution as a step towards federalisation, of 'local autonomy,' and of the necessity of delegating the work of the over-burdened Imperial Parliament. But the Irish Nationalists, whatever concessions they were prepared to yield to expediency, never budged from their principle of 'Ireland a nation,' with all that this implied. This ideal the Bill did little enough to realise. It proposed to establish in Dublin a subordinate Parliament, consisting of two Chambers, and having control over all concerns in Ireland not specifically reserved to the Imperial Parliament; but the number of matters thus reserved, either temporarily or permanently, was so great as virtually to reduce the Irish National Parliament to the status of a glorified County Council. Mr. Arthur Balfour put the matter in a nutshell when he said that the Bill gave Ireland a National Parliament without national powers.¹ Moreover, the difficulty of disentangling the finance of the two countries, so long as any union between them existed, opened the financial clauses of the Bill to a destructive criticism; for, as Sir Edward Carson pointed out, Home Rule was an impossibility without fiscal autonomy.²

¹ Speech at Preston, 13 June 1912.

² Speech at Liverpool, 23 January 1912.

In Ireland, as was to be expected, the Bill met with a very mixed reception. It was accepted with enthusiasm by the Nationalist Convention which met in Dublin on the 23rd of April, and with less enthusiasm by Mr. William O'Brien and his followers. In the course of the debate on the second reading in the House of Commons, on the 30th, Mr. O'Brien declared that, save for the reconciliation it would bring, there was no finality about it, and in saying this he was expressing the opinion of most people in Ireland. John Redmond and his party might, for politic reasons, organise demonstrations in favour of the Bill; but the general view of Nationalists was truly expressed by Professor T. M. Kettle, of the National University, who welcomed it as 'not the end, but the beginning' and as 'the seed of freedom lodged in Irish soil.'¹ Sinn Fein was less complimentary. According to Patrick H. Pearse, who was to head the Easter Week rebellion in 1916, John Redmond by accepting the Bill had 'sold Ireland's birthright for a mess of pottage, and a dubious mess of pottage at that.' He himself defined the object of true Nationalism as the completion of the work left unfinished by Wolfe Tone:

To break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assist the independence of my country—these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter—these were my means.

In these words of Tone he found 'implicit all the philosophy of Irish Nationalism, all the teaching of the Gaelic League and the later prophets.'² It was the Sinn Fein confession of faith. Unionists, on the other hand, whose danger had been fully recognised by Mr. O'Brien, failed to be won over by the inadequate safeguards provided for them in the Bill. The Synod of the Church of Ireland, with only five dissentients, protested against it, and the

¹ *Notes from Ireland* (1913), p. 40. Mr. Kettle, a very gallant gentleman and popular with men of all opinions, accepted a commission after the outbreak of the Great War, and died fighting at the front.

² Address at the grave of Wolfe Tone, June 22, 1913. *Bodestown Series*, No. 1: Three Addresses by P. H. Pearse, p. 6.

protest was re-echoed in a great meeting of Southern Unionists at Cork on 20 April 1912. In Ireland, at least, no one was convinced by Redmond's assertion, during the second reading debate, that the Bill would be accepted by the Irish, in Ireland and out of it, as a final settlement.

The debate on the Committee stage of the Bill, which opened on 11 June 1912, is mainly memorable owing to the fact that in it the question of the separate treatment of Ulster was first definitely raised, the proposal being to exclude from the scope of the measure the four predominantly Protestant counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Londonderry. The motion was defeated, Mr. Asquith asserting that it was impossible to split Ireland, for which he claimed 'a fundamental unity of race, temperament, and tradition,' while Redmond said that Home Rule was put forward as a national demand and that the Irish nation must not be partitioned. There was, however, little sign in Ireland of the correctness of Mr. Birrell's forecast that there would be no civil war and that the minority would accept the situation. Mr. Asquith might tell a Nationalist assembly in Dublin (20 July) that the proposed exclusion of Ulster was 'a mere strategic manoeuvre'; the fact remained that the temper of the Protestant North was rapidly rising, and, fortified by Mr. Bonar Law's declaration at the meeting at Blenheim on 27 July—that he could imagine no length of resistance to which the Ulster people might go in which he would not be ready to support them—the northern Protestants organised numerous demonstrations against Home Rule, culminating on the 28th September, 'Ulster Day,' in the signing of the famous Covenant. This was promulgated by the Ulster Unionist Council, and the text ran as follows :

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V., humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, hereby pledge ourselves in Solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children,

our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland ; and, in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us, we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right, we hereto subscribe our names, and, further, we individually declare that we have not already signed this Covenant.

The impression made by this event was enormous. The proceedings were attended by a vast concourse of people, and a deep religious significance was given to them by the fact that in some five hundred Protestant churches of various denominations services were held on the same day, with appropriate hymns and lessons, and closing with the National Anthem. In the procession which conducted Sir Edward Carson to the hall dummy rifles were carried, which led to a good deal of untimely and silly scoffing in the English Liberal press. But in the south of Ireland the true significance of this demonstration was well understood, and the impression made by it was deepened when, on the 22nd of November, it was announced that the Covenant had been signed by nearly half a million people.

Apart from the usual tale of agrarian outrages, there were during this year ominous signs that the old religious antagonisms, which had all but died down, were beginning to spring again into sinister life. On 29 June members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, armed with pikes, brutally attacked a Belfast Sunday School procession consisting mainly of women and children, and the Protestant shipyard workers retaliated by a vigorous assault on their Catholic fellow-workmen. On 14 September a serious political riot broke out on the Celtic football ground in Belfast, in the course of which a hundred people were more or less seriously injured. In the South, however, there was as yet little or no sign of violent sectarian hate, though the local authorities continued to exclude Protestants almost entirely from the offices in their gift.

While the Home Rule Bill, riddled with criticism and twice thrown out by the House of Lords, was making

its painful way through Parliament, the realities of the situation in Ireland itself were becoming more and more apparent even to English eyes. Mr. Birrell was right when he said in the House of Commons that 'a new movement and a new spirit were springing up in Ireland—a national movement, full of Irish sentiment.' He was entirely wrong when he described the Ulster opposition to this movement as 'based on religious bigotry.' It was based on the conviction, right or wrong, that in any Irish National Parliament the religious and material interests of the Protestant and industrial North, which would be in a helpless minority, would be sacrificed to those of the Catholic and agricultural South. Their attitude was not modified by such 'safeguards' as Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond were prepared to offer, e.g. disproportionate representation in the Irish Parliament, which they rejected as undemocratic and fallacious, since it would still leave them in the minority; and Mr. Asquith's refusal to meet their views they interpreted as a 'declaration of war.' During the year 1913, accordingly, the organisation of resistance in Ulster proceeded apace, and by the autumn it was complete. On 25 September the Ulster Unionist Council formally organised itself as a Provisional Government consisting of a central authority of seventy-six members under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Carson, with committees for the Volunteers, legal subjects, education, and customs, excise, and posts; and on the following day Sir Edward Carson began a tour of inspection of the Volunteers in various centres, the whole force—estimated at 100,000—being under the supreme command of General Sir George Richardson, K.C.B.

In making these warlike preparations the Ulster leaders were careful to insist that they had no aggressive designs, threatened no one, and were actuated solely by the determination to maintain their traditional rights and liberties; they re-affirmed their complete loyalty to the Empire, and undertook to place the whole armed force of Ulster at its disposal in the event of its being attacked. But the arming of the North was bound to have an unfortunate repercussion in the South, and the watchful enemies of England were not slow to improve the occasion. The Sinn Féin organ *Irish Freedom*, for January 1913,

pointed out that war between England and Germany was practically inevitable, and declared such a war to be 'Ireland's opportunity'; and this theme was elaborated by Sir Roger Casement in an article on 'Ireland, Germany and the Next War,' contributed to the July number of the same review.¹ On 23 January the Sinn Fein National Council passed a resolution refusing to be content with anything short of independence, and affirming it to be the duty of all Irishmen to possess a knowledge of arms.² A vigorous anti-recruiting campaign was started, and every effort was made to pour contempt on the British Army. 'Rifles would hardly be needed, fly-paper would surely suffice to capture the greater part of the little "Yorks" and "Berks,"' wrote a popular Nationalist paper. 'By the way, we have pigs of these breeds in Tipperary already. Poor kiddies, poor little boy soldiers! How will they withstand the onrush of conquering German Uhlans some day?'³ The cumulative effect of such silly insults as these, contrasted with the popular favour shown to the military in the North, could not but have an influence on the temper of the Army which later on had important results. Meanwhile, the arming of Ulster was hailed by Sinn Fein as a practical demonstration of the independent spirit of Ireland, and one worthy of imitation. It was decided that the Catholic South should also be armed.

For this purpose a provisional committee was formed, consisting of members of the Sinn Fein organisation, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League, and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and under its auspices a mass meeting, presided over by Professor John MacNeill, of the National University, was held in the Rotunda Rink in Dublin on the 25th of November, in order to inaugurate the National Volunteers. It was noted that the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the United Irish League, which were attached to Redmond's party, were not officially represented at the meeting, though many of their members were present. The Transport and General Workers' Union, on the other hand, sent a contingent with bands. As the immediate result of the meeting,

¹ Under the pseudonym of 'Shan Van Vocht.'

² Reported in the *Gaelic American* (New York), 8 Feb. 1913.

³ *Tipperary Star*, 20 September 1913.

4000 men were enrolled, and on the following day a committee was established for their drilling and organisation. The object of the Volunteers, as defined in the form of application for membership, was 'to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland without distinction of class, creed, or politics.' The implied ideal was that afterwards symbolised in the combined green and orange of the Sinn Féin flag; but it was soon clear that it had no relation to reality. The Protestants of the North were not for a moment deceived by this vision conjured up by a handful of young idealists, and that it did not reflect opinion in the Catholic South was proved by the temper of the meetings held in the provincial centres for the establishment of branches of the Volunteer organisation. It is true that at Galway a call for cheers for 'Sir Edward Carson's Volunteers' evoked an enthusiastic response; but when at the later inaugural meeting at Cork, Professor MacNeill made the same appeal, the audience rose in wrath, bombarded the speaker with chairs, and stormed the platform.

A new and more dangerous element had been meanwhile added to this welter by the strike of transport workers which began in Dublin in August under the leadership of James Larkin. The all but intolerable conditions of life to which labour in Dublin was and is subjected have already been mentioned; they were described in the report of the Local Government Board Commission on the strike as 'the worst in Europe';¹ and at first public sympathy among all classes was largely enlisted on the side of the strikers. But this sympathy was soon alienated by the violence of Larkin's language and actions. On 26 August he was arrested, but was released on bail. On the 30th the mob in Sackville Street furiously attacked the Metropolitan Police, who quickly quelled the riot. On the 31st Larkin, reaching the balcony of an hotel in Sackville Street in disguise, delivered a violent harangue to the mob, and this produced another riot. Delegates of the English Trade Unions were now called in to assist in arriving at a settlement; but on 13 September the employers, in view of the fact that 'Larkinism' included

¹ In Dublin 21,000 families were found to be living in one-room tenements, of which 9000 were occupied by four or more persons.

in its programme a repudiation of the obligation to keep inconvenient agreements, refused to resume negotiations, and decided on a sympathetic lock-out. This threw out of work several thousand men who had refused to sign a pledge not to join or to assist the Transport Workers' Union. On the 21st there was another serious conflict with the police, and the unemployed next day were estimated to number 13,000. The strike spread sporadically to England, owing to the refusal of English workers to handle 'tainted goods'; but Larkin's violent attitude during a propaganda tour in England alienated the still predominantly sober elements in the British Labour movement, and the strike collapsed early in 1914. There was nothing Nationalist about it; at the Board of Trade inquiry Larkin had exposed the failure of the Nationalist members to assist the cause of the workers, and he denounced Redmond and Carson equally as 'in league with capitalism'; the arch strike-breaker, William Martin Murphy, on whom the hatred of the proletariat was concentrated, was owner and inspirer of the Nationalist *Independent*. The strike failed, but its consequences were momentous. Liberty Hall became definitely the centre of that spirit which was to be known later as Bolshevik. Moreover, during the late autumn, Larkin had begun drilling and organising that 'Citizen army'—a body distinct from the Irish Volunteers—which was to play the leading part in the Easter Week Rebellion.¹

The situation in Ireland was now very alarming, and competent judges, such as Sir Henry Blake and Earl Grey, pointed out the imminent danger of civil war were the Government policy persisted in. Liberal statesmen, influenced perhaps by a series of defeats at the polls, began to talk of compromise; Sir Edward Grey, for instance, affirming at Berwick (17 October) and again at Alnwick (17 December) that 'Home Rule within Home Rule' for Ulster was quite consistent with the maintenance of the essential unity of Ireland. On 6 December Mr. Asquith, at Manchester, said that he saw nothing with which he would quarrel in principle in the bases of settlement laid

¹ See James Connolly, *Labour in Ireland* (1917), for the Liberty Hall view of the strike, and Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin: The Story of the Great Strike* (1914), for the other point of view.

down by Sir Edward Carson at Sheffield four days earlier, namely, 'that it must not humiliate Ulstermen, that they must not be treated differently to other parts of the United Kingdom, and that there must be no measure establishing a basis for the ultimate separation of Ireland from Great Britain.' On 14 November, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, however, Redmond had violently attacked the claim of a small minority in Ireland to dictate to the rest. It would be worth paying a large price, he said, to obtain a settlement by consent, but the door of the Empire must not be slammed in the face of Ireland by the fear of fanatics or by the bludgeons of bullies.

The opinion of the Protestant North against Home Rule was hardened—if that were possible—by the continued activities of the United Irish League and the Hibernians during the year 1913, exhibiting the same tale of outrages as before. Boycotting was again in operation as a political weapon, the most notable instance being the boycott proclaimed (29 November) against twenty-nine Sligo merchants who had signed a pronouncement criticising the financial provisions of the Home Rule Bill and declaring that it would be fatal to the commercial interests of Ireland. Point was given to the boycotting resolution by the statement that it was a 'united protest against the conduct of a number of local *Protestant* merchants.'¹ On the other hand, at a great demonstration to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the relief of Derry, held on 18 December, Dr. D'Arcy, Protestant Bishop of Down and later (1920) Primate of All Ireland, while affirming that Protestants bore 'no ill-will to any dwellers in this land' and were 'patriotic Irishmen,' re-affirmed the Covenant as 'the inevitable outcome of the heart and mind of Ulster.'²

In the face of this dangerous situation the Irish Government, the counsels of which were inspired through Mr. Birrell by the Nationalist leaders, had exhibited the same impotence as in the case of the agrarian outrages. It would not be true to say that the arming of Ulster had been connived at; for more than one considerable seizure of arms was made. At Belfast, in June, a thousand

¹ *Sligo Champion*, Nov. 29, 1913; *The Times*, Dec. 1.

² *Irish Times*, Dec. 19, 1913.

rifles, shipped as 'electrical plant' had been seized, and in Dublin a large number consigned to Lord Farnham.¹ It was not, however, until December that a proclamation was issued prohibiting the importation of arms altogether. It was more easy to issue than to enforce, and from the first, in view of the repeal of the Arms Act, its legality was disputed.² At the opening of 1914 serious efforts were made to arrive at a compromise; but the conference of the Liberal and Nationalist leaders with Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Bonar Law only resulted—to use Mr. Asquith's words—in 'bringing out the difficulties.' In these circumstances the Prime Minister, during the debate on the second reading of the Bill (9 March), proposed a 'middle course,' i.e. the provisional exclusion of Ulster for six years by county option, the excluded counties to come automatically under the Dublin Government at the end of that time unless the Imperial Parliament decided otherwise. This proposal Redmond supported, but as 'the ultimate limit of concession.' Mr. O'Brien, on the other hand, protested against this plan for 'chopping an ancient nation into a thing of shreds and patches,' and he was supported by Mr. Tim Healy. More fatal, however, was the attitude of Sir Edward Carson. He would, he said, never consent to sacrifice the loyal people of the South and West, and the men of Ulster did not want 'sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years.' In the debate on Mr. Bonar Law's motion of censure on the Government (19 March) the tension reached breaking point. Redmond had earlier declared that if Ulster did not accept the compromise proposed, the Bill must pass as it stood and be imposed on Ulster with all the forces of the Crown, and on 4 December 1913, Sir Edward Grey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, had said that a 'fanatical outburst' in Ulster would have to be suppressed by force. The leader of the Opposition now declared that the attitude of the Army would be for the Army to decide, since while 'in case of mere disorder it

¹ *Ann. Reg.* 1913, p. 128.

² Doubt was thrown on the validity of the Proclamation by the decision of the Court of first instance in the case of *Hunter v. Coleman*, an action brought by a firm of Belfast gunsmiths at Belfast Assizes against a collector of Customs at the port for detaining arms consigned to plaintiffs at Hamburg, on Dec. 18, 1913. This decision was later reversed.

ought to and would obey, if it were a question of civil war, soldiers were citizens like the rest of us.' Sir Edward Carson, for his part, denounced 'this Government of cowards, who postponed dealing with the Ulster movement and would not remove the time limit because of Mr. Redmond,' and were 'now going to entrench themselves behind the King's troops'; and he accused them of wanting an outbreak in Ulster as a pretext for putting the Ulstermen down. At the close of his speech he left the debate and, with eight of the Unionist leaders, started at once for Belfast to concert measures of resistance.

So early as 14 March 1914 the Government had taken certain military precautions in case of 'serious disorder' breaking out in Ulster, the General commanding in Ireland, Sir Arthur Paget, being instructed to convey a force of cavalry, infantry, and artillery northward, ostensibly to protect military stores from possible depredations by the Volunteers. This movement was to be supported by a British squadron stationed at Lamlash in Arran. Whatever truth there may have been in the belief that the Government intended by these movements to crush the resistance of Ulster by force—and this was strenuously denied by Ministers—the result was to show that in any such policy they would not have the support of the Army.¹ The troops were received in Ulster not as enemies but as friends, mutual courtesies being exchanged,² while Sir Edward Carson declared that he never could or would be associated with any movement for weakening the Empire, and that in the event of international difficulties the Ulster Volunteers would fight shoulder to shoulder with the British Army in its defence.³ The temper of the Army, on the other hand, was shown by the Curragh incident of 20 March, when General Hubert Gough, commanding the 3rd Cavalry Brigade stationed at the Curragh, with fifty-seven of his officers (out of seventy) preferred to accept dismissal from the Army if ordered north. The circumstances in which this resolution was arrived at are obscure and complicated; but

¹ In February Lord Roberts, supporting the opinion of Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, had said in the House of Lords that any such attempt would wreck the British Army.

² See, e.g., *Irish Times*, 21, 24, 26 March 1914.

³ *Irish Times*, 25 March 1914.

there can be no doubt that the officers believed that they had been given an option in the matter, and that they were under the impression that an immediate aggressive movement against Ulster was contemplated.¹ In any case, the effect was to make it clear that the Army could not be trusted to coerce the Ulster loyalists, and rage and consternation were general in the Liberal and Nationalist camps, where the action of the officers was denounced as 'militarism' and 'a second Zabern,' regardless of the fact that the true soldier, according to the Prussian doctrine, will shoot his own father if ordered to do so by the War Lord.

Affairs in Ireland were now rapidly coming to a head. The Ulster Volunteers had completed their organisation, and on 17 March they were specially mobilised to guard residences and prevent the arrest of their leaders. To justify their attitude the Ulster Unionist Council issued on 17 April a statement giving what they believed to be the actual facts with regard to the recent military and naval operations and plans of the Government, and accusing Ministers of a deliberate design to crush the Ulster movement by force. A few days later the Volunteers were fully armed as well as organised. On the night of the 24th-25th of April 35,000 rifles and 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition were landed at Larne, in County Antrim, and successfully distributed by means of six hundred motor-cars and lorries to various centres; 12,000 rifles were at the same time landed at Bangor and Donaghadee on the coast of Down. This 'gun-running' had been admirably organised. Until the last moment none save the mysterious directing committee knew where the arms were to be landed, and the Government, which had been led to believe that the destination was Belfast, and had stationed troops there to intercept them, was completely outwitted.² This action was described by Mr. Asquith in Parliament as 'an unparalleled outrage,' and British war-ships were ordered to patrol the coast in order to prevent its repetition. But though

¹ The whole matter later formed the subject of acrimonious debates in Parliament. An abstract of these will be found in the *Ann. Reg.* 1914, pp. 55 ff.

² For this, and the Ulster movement generally, see Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's Stand for Union* (1922).

there was no truth in the charge that the Government had connived at the arming of Ulster, and no justification for the description of the Ulster Volunteers as 'chartered rebels,' no legal action was taken against them. At first, indeed, the Government had determined to institute proceedings in the High Court against the leaders by filing an *ex officio* information for riot, disturbance, and obstructing the King's officers, and this was actually drafted by the Attorney-General. John Redmond, however, strongly advised against this course, and it was therefore decided to take no proceedings. From the point of view of political opportunism the decision may have been wise. For the prestige of the Government it was disastrous. For the proper function of a government is to govern, and if its authority is defied with impunity it ceases to have any effective existence. Especially is this the case in Ireland, where from time immemorial government has been respected just in so far as it is strong, and no further.

Protestant Ulster, then, was armed and defiant. Meanwhile, in Catholic Ireland, the National Volunteers, encouraged by this stimulating example, were growing into a formidable force. Their numbers on the 6th of May 1914 had been reported as 26,696; on the following 7th of October there were 178,649 on the roll. The Nationalist leaders had hitherto held aloof from the movement. Its rapid increase, however, alarmed them; for they feared that it would end by transferring power from them to the extremer men who had hitherto directed it, and they therefore decided to take it under their control before it was too late. On 9 June, accordingly, Redmond issued a statement to the effect that his party, which had thought the movement premature, had been converted by the Curragh incident and the Larne gun-running, and that they were now prepared to support it. To this end he demanded a reconstitution of the governing committee on representative lines, suggesting that it should at once be reinforced by the addition of twenty-five members, from different parts of the country, nominated at the instance of the Nationalist party and in sympathy with its policy and aims. Towards the end of the month the committee, recognising that it had little support in the

country for its resistance, grudgingly acceded to this demand. The Volunteer movement in the South was thus for a time saved from disruption, and in July the Nationalists started the Defence of Ireland Fund, in order to secure arms and complete the organisation of the force.

There were now in Ireland two rival armed organisations, and to those who knew the character of the people the situation seemed pregnant with disaster. On the 15th of June 1914 the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary presented to Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary, a report in which the following passage reads like inspired prophecy :

In Ireland the training and drilling to the use of arms of a great part of the male population is a new departure which is bound in the not distant future to alter all the existing conditions of life. Obedience to law has never been a prominent characteristic of the people. In times of passion or excitement the law has only been maintained by force, and this has been rendered practicable owing to the want of cohesion among the crowds hostile to the police. If the people became armed and drilled, effective police control would vanish. Events are moving. Each county will soon have a trained army far outnumbering the police, and those who control the volunteers will be in a position to dictate to what extent the law of the land may be carried into effect.¹

On the 16th Lord Robert Cecil moved the adjournment of the House of Commons, in order to draw attention to the extreme danger of the situation. But nothing could disturb the complacency of Mr. Birrell. He had perhaps not read the Inspector's report of the day before ; or had dismissed it, according to his custom, as 'rubbish.' In any case, he now argued that, provided that the due formalities were observed, drilling and the carrying of arms were alike legal ; that the Volunteer movement did not add greatly to the danger of the situation ; and that discipline and the ability to use fire-arms would be good for the Irish people.

While the official prophets of the Government were thus prophesying that which is good, the Amending Bill,

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland (Cd. 8279), p. 7.

embodying Mr. Asquith's 'middle course,' had been sent up to the House of Lords, where it underwent a drastic transformation before it was passed on the 8th of July 1914. On the 10th, at a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council, Captain (afterwards Sir James) Craig read the preamble to the Constitution of the Ulster Provisional Government, and the Boyne celebrations on the 12th were made the occasion for a series of monster demonstrations, the moral of which was tersely put by Sir Edward Carson at Drumbeg, 'Give us a clean cut, or come and fight us!' In the South, on the other hand, opposition to any form of partition was hardening, and the Wolfe Tone celebration at Bodenstown on the 14th was attended by an unprecedented concourse of people. A telegram from Mr. John Devoy, editor of the *Gaelic American*, and later a leading spirit in the Sinn Fein German plot against the Entente,¹ hailed 'the voice from the grave which forbids partition and brands as infamous any man who consents to exclude Ulster even for one day,'² a theme enlarged on by the Sinn Fein Press with the utmost exuberance of epithet. On the 21st a conference was held at Buckingham Palace, at the instance of the King, between Ministers and the leaders of the Irish parties, to consider the possibility of finding an area to be excluded from the operation of the Home Rule Bill; but on the 24th it dissolved, being unable, in the words of the Speaker who presided, 'to agree in principle, or in detail, on such an area.'

Such was the situation when an unfortunate incident poured fresh oil on the flames. On the morning of Sunday, 26 July, the 'Dublin Regiment' of the National Volunteers, about a thousand strong, marched to the little port of Howth, some nine miles from the capital, arriving at the harbour at about one o'clock. Simultaneously a yacht loaded with arms berthed at the pier; and presently every one of the Volunteers was supplied with a rifle, those remaining being loaded into motor-cars. The few police present were forcibly prevented from interfering, and shortly before two o'clock the Volunteers set out on the march back to Dublin.

¹ See *Documents relative to the Sinn Fein Movement*, Government White Paper (Cmd. 1108), issued in Jan. 1921.

² *Irish Freedom*, July 1914.

The local police had already telephoned to headquarters in Dublin and, in the absence of the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Harrel, believed it to be his duty to take action. This seemed all the more necessary, if the law was not to be brought into utter contempt, by the peculiar circumstances of the gun-running at Howth. The Ulster Volunteers had imported arms by stratagem, under cover of night, and had been able to justify their action in some sort by the judicial decision which had declared the Arms Proclamation illegal. But this decision had been reversed by the Dublin Court of King's Bench on 15 June, and the act of the Irish Volunteers was therefore one of ostentatious defiance of the law; for the Proclamation remained in force until its withdrawal on 5 August.¹ Unable to obtain immediate instructions from the Under-Secretary, Sir James Dougherty—who did not record his views till 5 P.M., when the affair was over—Mr. Harrel applied on his own responsibility for military assistance, no Royal Irish Constabulary being available. With a small force of Dublin Metropolitan police and two companies of infantry he then set out on the road to Howth, and when the Volunteers on their return march neared Clontarf they found this force blocking both the main roads to Dublin.

A halt was called, and Mr. Harrel stepped forward to parley with the two leaders of the Volunteers. On their refusal to order their men to give up their rifles, he ordered the police to disarm them. In the short scuffle that followed the soldiers assisted the police; the Volunteers fought with clubbed rifles, and some of them received slight bayonet wounds. In the end nineteen rifles and a number of wooden clubs or batons were captured; but the rear ranks of the Volunteers had taken advantage of the fight in front to disperse and either carry

¹ 'Some arms were smuggled into the north of Ireland, and they were secretly and unostentatiously distributed. That proceeding was, of course, very wrong, but the authority of the Government was not defied. . . . The course at Howth differed altogether from the method of the landing in the north. At Howth the arms were ostentatiously landed in daylight, and the constabulary there, as well as the coastguard officers, were overpowered with violence' (Evidence of Sir John Ross of Bladensburg, formerly Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, before the Royal Commission on the Insurrection in Ireland).

their rifles off or throw them away. After the road was clear two soldiers were wounded by revolver shots fired, not by Volunteers, but by bystanders.¹

The affair being now considered at an end, the troops were ordered to march back to Dublin. They consisted of a hundred Scottish Borderers, under Captain Cobden, who were joined near Fairview by about sixty men of the same regiment under Major Coke. Their route took them through a low quarter of the city, where they were followed by a crowd which, not content with hurling abusive epithets at them, presently began to pelt them with stones and other missiles. All down Talbot Street, Earl Street, and Sackville Street it had been possible to hold the mob in check by the rear-guard occasionally turning and threatening them with bayonets. But by the time the troops, marching along the quay of the Liffey called Bachelor's Walk, had reached the corner of Liffey Street matters were so serious—25 per cent. of the men being badly hurt—that Major Haig, who had just arrived and taken command as senior officer, told off thirty men, who turned and lined the road, four or five of them kneeling. He asked five or six of them if they were loaded, and ordered them to be ready to fire if he gave the order. Immediately afterwards, owing to some misunderstanding, twenty-one of the men discharged their rifles, with the result that three persons were killed and thirty-eight more or less seriously wounded. In the course of the inquiry into this unhappy affair Major Haig stated that he was not aware that the hundred men under Captain Cobden had been ordered to load at Howth Road and were still loaded. A Judicial Commission appointed to inquire into the whole affair decided that the soldiers were not justified in firing, but failed to come to any

¹ This follows the official account (for further details see Report of the Royal Commission, Cd. 7631 & 7649). In 'Clontarf'—a supplement to the *Irish Review*, July-Aug. 1914—Thomas MacDonagh—afterwards executed as one of the leaders of the Easter Week rebellion—who was one of the Volunteer officers with whom Mr. Harrel talked, gives a somewhat different version. He does not mention any scuffle, but says that the Commissioner, after negotiation, allowed the Volunteers to keep their rifles on condition of their being at once dismissed. The force, he says, was thereupon marched into Fairview Park and formally dismissed. His account, while naturally magnifying the rôle played by the Volunteers, is moderate and restrained.

decision as to whether or no an order to fire had been given.¹

This Bachelor's Walk 'Massacre' was a serious embarrassment to the Liberal Government, and they proceeded to extricate themselves by a characteristic method. Their efforts to make Mr. Harrel solely responsible, on the ground that he had disobeyed his instructions, broke down on the fact, revealed under cross-examination in Parliament, that these instructions had only been written four hours after the event. A Royal Commission, carefully selected, was more effective. Mr. Harrel was found to have exceeded his powers in calling out the military, and was dismissed the force. The effect on the *moral* of the police was disastrous, for henceforward it was felt that no action could be taken by them, even in grave emergencies, without risk of being 'broken' by the Government.² The effect on the *moral* of Sinn Féin is best explained in the words of Thomas MacDonagh:

The whole moral of this story, as of the whole rise and progress of the Irish Volunteers during the past eight months, is that if the leaders of the Irish people act strongly and decisively, they can succeed in their action. The young men of Ireland have got a strong lead from the Irish Volunteers; and they march to victory. Ireland has now the strength to enforce her choice of destiny. The men who ruled Ireland in the past under Tory régime and under Liberal régime lost their power on

¹ In his evidence before the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate (Aug. 30, 1919) the Hon. W. Bourke Cockran thus summarised the Howth gun-running incident: 'Gun-running promised to become a favourite sport of these chartered rebels, the Ulstermen—chartered by the very Government they were defying. But when the Nationalists undertook to bring in a cargo of arms the British soldiery appeared on the spot and with bullet and bayonet prevented them from landing a single rifle, shooting down women and children who happened to be spectators' (see 66th Congress, 1st Session: Senate: Document No. 106, p. 893).

A recent German 'historian' of Ireland succeeds in outdoing even Mr. Bourke Cockran. His succinct account of the Howth gun-running is as follows: 'On July 26, 1914, the Volunteers brilliantly underwent their baptism of fire; a yacht from Rouen had secretly landed arms and ammunition at Howth, and when the English garrison of Dublin tried to disarm the Volunteers, it was put to flight by them with the butt-ends of their rifles; whereupon, in anger at its defeat, it fired into the unarmed crowd, mostly consisting of women and children, and killed and wounded many persons'—Julius Pokorny, *Irland* (Perthes' Kleine Völker- und Länder-Kunde, Band 1), Gotha, 1916, p. 135.

² See Report of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland (Cd. 8279), p. 6.

July 26. At Clontarf in 1914, as at Clontarf in 1014, has been won a national victory.¹

Such was the situation in Ireland within a month of the crime of Sarajevo—two organised hostile forces standing face to face, both protesting their pacific intentions, both refusing to budge an inch from claims which made an agreed peace impossible.² Small wonder that to foreign observers the Bachelor's Walk affair seemed to mark the beginning of troubles which would keep the British Government fully occupied at home.³ The language of the Sinn Fein leaders, indeed, gave little enough proof of a pacific spirit. Patrick Pearse, speaking to an Irish-American audience, rejoiced in the war-clouds hanging over his country :

To-day Ireland is once more organising, once more learning the noble trade of arms. . . . There is again in Ireland the murmur of a marching, and talk of guns and tactics. . . . The existence on Irish soil of an Irish army is the most portentous fact that has appeared in Ireland for over a hundred years ; a fact which marks definitely the beginning of the second stage of the Revolution which commenced when the Gaelic League was founded.⁴

¹ 'Clontarf,' *loc. cit.*

² The Ulster proclamations of a purely defensive attitude have already been noted. On 30 June the Irish Volunteers published a manifesto stating that they would 'do their utmost to promote peace and goodwill throughout Ireland,' their object being 'to secure the unity of all Ireland and of all Irishmen on the ground of national liberty.'

³ Baron Kühlmann is reported to have cabled to Berlin : 'The hour has come.'

⁴ 'Robert Emmet and the Ireland of To-day.' Speech at the Emmet Commemoration in the Academy of Music, Brooklyn, N.Y., 2 March 1914. *Bodenstown Series*, No. 1.

CHAPTER III

IRELAND AND THE GREAT WAR

Effect of the declaration of war—Nationalist support of the Government—John Redmond's speech—Passing of the Home Rule Bill—Attitude of Ulster—Split in the National Volunteer movement—Sinn Féin manifesto—Unifying effect of the war in Ireland—Recruiting in Ireland—Mistakes of the War Office—The Irish Volunteers—Intensive agitation—Fear of conscription—Growth of the seditious Press—Weakness of the Government.

THE tangled situation in Ireland seemed to be suddenly solved when the declaration of war against Germany on the 4th of August 1914 at once appeared to unite all Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom in a common cause. In the House of Commons Irish Unionists and both sections of the Irish Nationalists gave their support to the Government. John Redmond, in his speech on the 5th of August in support of the Vote of Credit, declared that the events of recent years had completely changed the feelings of Nationalists towards Great Britain. The Government, he said, might safely withdraw all the troops from Ireland, for her coasts would be defended by her armed sons, and the National Volunteers would gladly join for this purpose with their brethren of the North. In reply to Mr. Bonar Law, who suggested that this expression of loyalty was conditional, he denied this to be the case, saying that the settlement proposed was a severe disadvantage for Irish nationality, but that a moratorium was necessary, and that he hoped it would lead to a much improved Amending Bill. He cared most for two things : that autonomy should be extended to the whole of Ireland, and that no county should be coerced into Home Rule. When Nationalists and Ulstermen had fought side by side on the Continent, and drilled together for home defence, he believed it would be possible, as regards Home Rule, to present a real Amending Bill to the Government by agreement.

Thus Ireland was committed to the world war by the

united voice of her representatives ; the discordant voices in her midst were for the moment hushed by the awful rumbling of the approaching storm ; and her sons seemed at last to be united in a fraternal union directed to a common end. 'Ireland,' said Sir Edward Grey in his speech announcing to Parliament the declaration of war, 'Ireland is the one bright spot.'

It was almost at once apparent, however, that the old antagonisms, though obscured for the time, survived. Attempts to settle the Home Rule controversy by negotiation between the party leaders broke down ; and on the 14th of September it was announced in the newspapers that the Prime Minister intended to wind up the session at once, that then the Home Rule Bill would become law automatically under the Parliament Act, but that the Government would introduce a Bill¹ postponing the operation of the Act till after the war, and pledged itself to introduce an Amending Bill dealing with Ulster before the Home Rule Act should become operative. In announcing this policy to the House of Commons Mr. Asquith said that the new Bill would provide that the Act should not be put in operation for twelve months in any case, or, if the war was not then ended, before such further date, not later than the termination of the war, as might be fixed by Order in Council.

This action of the Government in taking advantage of the 'party truce' to place Home Rule upon the Statute Book, though it rallied the more moderate Nationalists to the common cause, was strongly resented by Unionists both in England and Ireland ; and Mr. Bonar Law denounced it in the House of Commons as a breach of faith. His language was re-echoed by Sir Edward Carson in a manifesto to the Ulster loyalists, in which he reiterated the determination of Ulster never to submit to Home Rule, but at the same time urged his followers, in view of the peril to the Empire, to be true to their motto of 'our country first.' At a great meeting held on 28 September to celebrate the second anniversary of Ulster Day he spoke in the same sense. On 16 September the Executive Committee of the Irish Unionist Alliance, representing the Unionists of

¹ This Bill also provided for a similar postponement of the Act disestablishing the Welsh Church.

the three southern provinces, also passed a resolution condemning 'the flagrant breach of faith by the Government,' but at the same time added another pointing out 'the duty of Irishmen to undertake their full share of Imperial responsibility in the present national emergency,' and calling upon its members and supporters to continue their efforts to secure recruits for the Army.

It seemed of happy augury that on this same 16 September John Redmond also issued a manifesto calling on the people of Ireland to take their part in this great national crisis, and asking that Irish recruits for the expeditionary force should be kept together in an Irish Brigade under Irish officers. The latter demand was endorsed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, at a great recruiting meeting held at the Dublin Mansion House on the 25th, at which Redmond again urged his countrymen to enlist. Meanwhile, however, though there had been no outward sign of disunion in the committee of the National Volunteers, it had from the first been clear that its Sinn Féin members were determined to resist recruiting in every way, and on the 24th of September, the eve of the Mansion House meeting, twenty members of the committee, headed by the chairman Professor John MacNeill, issued a manifesto denouncing John Redmond for consenting to 'a dismemberment of Ireland' and accusing him of being willing to 'risk another disruption' by announcing for the Irish Volunteers 'a programme fundamentally at variance with their own published and accepted aims and pledges'—namely, that it was their duty to take foreign service under a Government which was not Irish. In view of this attitude the signatories declared that the nominees of Mr. Redmond ceased to be members of the Provisional Committee, and they ended their pronouncement by reaffirming without qualification the manifesto proposed and adopted at the inaugural meeting, repudiating any undertaking for the partition of Ireland, and declaring that Ireland could not, with honour or safety, take part in foreign quarrels otherwise than through the free action of a National Government of her own.¹ Among the signatories

¹ Published in the *Irish Volunteer*, 3 Oct. 1914. In an article published by this organ on 10 October the following passage occurs: 'Ireland's national individuality, Ireland's national soul, demand that Ireland

were Pátrick H. Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh, and other leaders of the 1916 rebellion. Regret was expressed that, owing to his absence in America, the signature of Sir Roger Casement was not attached. That this manifesto had strong support among the Dublin Volunteers was shown on the following night, for while a few acted as sentinels at the Mansion House several thousands paraded in Sackville Street, amid dense masses of spectators, in support of Professor MacNeill. This was a declaration of war against the Nationalist party, and Redmond was prompt to take it up. He appealed, with striking success, to the provincial centres; and at a convention of Volunteers held in Dublin on the 30th a new Provisional Committee was elected, with John Redmond as president. The Sinn Féin leaders who had signed the manifesto of the 24th thereupon seceded and proceeded to organise a force of their own under the style of the Irish Volunteers.

This movement was not at the time regarded as serious. The spokesmen of Sinn Féin were men of no particular position or weight. There was, moreover, plentiful evidence that their gospel of hate made little appeal to the people at large, and that the interest of Ireland in the victory of the Empire was all but universally recognised. From Tyrone, for instance, the very storm centre of sectarian strife, the police had reported in June that 'distrust and hatred between Catholic and Protestant had never been so deep' within their memory; a few weeks later they reported that, during the mobilisation, Ulster and National Volunteers were turning out together with their bands to escort the troops leaving for the front. The

should take no part, either through its leaders or through its masses, in promoting this iniquitous war. England, the Bully of the nations, is in a difficulty. It is our duty to our ancestors, who risked and lost their lives to free Ireland from England, it is our duty to ourselves, who live under the heel of the mass of the same hypocritical power, it is our duty, above all, to those who will come after us in the inheritance of this land, to declare Ireland's neutrality.' The conclusion of the tirade seems somewhat lame! The hand of the German propagandist is more clearly revealed in an article published on 21 November. 'Men's minds,' it said, 'are turning to the possibilities of a Franco-German alliance (sic!). May it come to pass! And may the two great European nations, the old friend of Ireland and the new enemy of England, join with the United States in securing against the Pirate Empire the independence of Ireland.'

same was true, in varying degrees, of all parts of the country: 'The outbreak of war'—to quote the police reports—'worked a revolution in the state of party feeling.' Here and there, as e.g. in Monaghan and Westmeath, agrarian trouble continued intermittently, but from 4 August 1914 to the end of 1915 the reports from every county in the four provinces agree that 'there were practically no displays of party feeling.'¹ Ireland seemed at last united in a common effort directed to a common end. The union seemed to be symbolised by the support given to the National Volunteers by prominent Unionists in the South and the occasional fraternisation of the Ulster and National Volunteers in the North. To those who know Ireland and its deep-seated passions and antagonisms the mere list of the names of the notabilities who attended the great recruiting meeting at Warrenpoint in County Down (7 July 1915) reads like a miracle: there were present the Lord Lieutenant (the Marquess of Aberdeen), Mr. Justice Ross, Mr. W. A. Redmond, M.P., the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Cork and the Mayor of Londonderry. It was characteristic of the spirit of this unique year in Irish history.

Beneath the surface, however, the passions simmered, the antagonisms still glowed. The index to the true feelings of the people, the measure of their devotion, were the returns of the number of recruits to the army and to the various bodies of Volunteers. For the famous Irish regiments of the regular army recruiting was at first brisk, though even their cadres had to be filled up with English recruits who happened to be training in Ireland.² In the towns of Ulster recruiting was from the first fairly satisfactory, while—as was also the case in the south—the men of the countryside hung back. Of the Ulster Volunteers, numbering 85,000 in August 1914, 20,700 had joined the army by the end of December, this number representing the mass of those who were at that time of military age.

¹ *Confidential Intelligence Notes*. On 8 January 1915 the Corporation of Cork struck Professor Kuno Meyer off the list of freemen of the city.

² After the retreat from Mons the urgent need for replenishing infantry battalions led to the drafting of Irish recruits who had enlisted in the Irish cavalry into English line regiments. This was greatly resented. It did not lessen the resentment that the recruits were occasionally taken to the North Wall, for embarkation, in 'black Marias.'

The returns of enlistments from the ranks of the National Volunteers were less satisfactory ; but under the stimulus of the eloquence of the Nationalist leaders the situation in this respect was much improved later, the official returns showing that between 15 December 1914 and 15 December 1915, 10,794 joined the colours. It is clear, however, from these returns that there was never any question of either body of Volunteers joining the army *en masse*, and that the main source of recruits lay outside them. At the close of the year 1915 the Ulster Volunteers still numbered 56,000—of whom, however, a large proportion were at this time over military age, while the number of National Volunteers, which had reached 178,649 in October 1914, had only sunk to 152,090.

The unsatisfactory results of the recruiting campaign have been ascribed to various causes. There was, to begin with, little appreciation among the masses of the people of the gravity of the issues at stake, and therefore nothing to outweigh the old social prejudice against enlistment. The recruiting advertisements, too, devised by publicity agents in London who had no knowledge of what appeals to Irishmen, were amazingly ineffective, and worse, in their false sentiment and occasional blatant vulgarity. The organisation of recruiting was also very defective, the ardour of would-be recruits being in many cases damped when they found they had to go forty or fifty miles to the nearest recruiting station. Nor was there any honest effort made to conciliate the Irish national spirit. Mr. Lloyd George himself blamed 'the folly almost amounting to malignity of the War Office,' which had refused to entertain the idea of turning the National Volunteers into an Irish Army Corps and had rejected the offer of a group of loyal Irish ladies to work flags for the new regiments. There can be little doubt that an appeal to national sentiment, as in the case of flags and insignia generally, might have produced a quite disproportionate effect for good. But in judging the War Office for its refusal to consider the formation of an Irish Army Corps two things have to be remembered. In the early and critical stages of the war mobile units were the great need, and regiments are more quickly made efficient than Army Corps, which—as the experience of the two Irish Divisions was to prove

—take a long time to organise and train.¹ Secondly, until the definite breach between the Sinn Feiners and the Redmondites in October 1914, it was by no means certain that the National Volunteers were to be trusted, and even after the breach the police reported that a considerable proportion of the Redmondite Volunteers were in sympathy with Professor MacNeill. It may well have seemed too speculative an undertaking to train and arm 'for the protection of the coasts of Ireland' (which were in little danger), a force which, under influences already strongly at work, might be used for less innocent purposes.

It is, indeed, to these influences and to other causes which they exploited, rather than to any action or inaction of the War Office, that the refusal to enlist for the war on the part of large sections of the population must be ascribed. In setting up the organisation of the Irish Volunteers the Sinn Feiners did not succeed in obtaining any large nominal following, but they made up for their lack of numbers by their fanatical zeal, their exuberant eloquence, and the efficiency of their organisation. Of all the Volunteer forces in existence during 1915 the Irish Volunteers and their allies the Citizen Army alone displayed any activity in drilling and exercising, which they were allowed to do without let or hindrance. They occasionally even enjoyed the protection of the police. At Limerick, for instance, on Whit Sunday 1915, a parade of Irish Volunteers was only saved from ending in a humiliating rout by the intervention of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Volunteers, who were over one thousand strong and most of them armed, were returning to the station through the Irishtown quarter, where many soldiers' families lived, when they were furiously attacked by a crowd of women—mostly wives of the Munster Fusiliers—and had to be shepherded through the danger zone by an escort of constables.²

While the Sinn Fein Volunteers were thus braving the wrath of the wives of the men serving at the front, Sinn

¹ Much bitterness was afterwards caused by the transference—under stress of circumstances at the front—of the artillery of the 16th (Irish) Division to the Guards.

² *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1915, p. 20. On November 19, at Loughrea in Galway, on the formation of a branch of the Irish Volunteers the National Volunteers marched through the town and smashed the windows of prominent Sinn Feiners (*ibid.*).

Fein agitators and organisers were busy in those counties where the tradition of disaffection was strongest—Limerick, Kerry, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford, and Galway. Their object, openly avowed, was to prevent recruiting for the army and to build up their own force with a view to taking immediate advantage of 'Ireland's opportunity.' They were more successful in the former object than in the latter, for in the case of recruiting they were assisted by what the police reports describe as 'the laziness and cowardice of the young men of the farmer and shop-assistant classes.' They conjured up the bogey of 'conscription' with notable effect, until the exclusion of Ireland from the Military Service Act laid this spectre to rest for the time being. Many National Volunteers ceased to attend drill because they feared that, if they were trained, they might be called upon to fight; ¹ and a certain number joined the Irish Volunteers as the best safeguard against conscription.² The Sinn Feiners were helped, too, by the immense prosperity of the country, which—what with separation allowances and the high prices obtained for agricultural produce—had never been so full of money; for this disinclined the young men of the more prosperous classes to exchange present comforts for the miseries and dangers of the trenches. If, as the Sinn Feiners reiterated, this was solely 'England's war,' they had the most patriotic reasons for holding aloof from it; for all the history they

¹ *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1914, p. 18.

² The numbers of the Nationalist Volunteers given in the subjoined table, showing fluctuations during the year preceding the Easter Week rebellion, are taken from the official returns. Those in the sections marked *a*, *b*, *c*, were reckoned as disloyal.

	National Volunteers (Redmondite)	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>c</i>
		National Volunteers (in sympathy with MacNeill)	Irish Volunteers		Citizen Army
			Country	Dublin	
May 6, 1914	26,696
Oct. 7, 1914	178,649	7,443	..	2,150	60
Dec. 16, 1914	152,090	11,247	..	2,100	60
Jan. 15, 1915	149,742	9,543	..	2,100	60
Dec. 27, 1915	112,446	5,112	6,137	2,225	100
Jan. 3, 1916	112,050	5,038	6,355	2,225	100
April 17, 1916	104,984	4,457	8,381	2,225	100

had ever learned at school had, under the benevolent neutrality of a philosophic government, been carefully selected with a view to inspiring hatred of England. On the whole the wonder is, not that Ireland did not provide more recruits, but that she provided so many.

Incredible as it may now seem, there was during the first four months after the outbreak of war no law in force prohibiting the importation of arms into Ireland. There were, indeed, certain warrants issued during this time by the Lord-Lieutenant to the police, authorising them to seize arms consigned to the Irish Volunteers; but it was not till the amendment of the regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act, on 5 November 1914, that the military authorities were empowered to prohibit altogether the sale, transfer and disposal of fire-arms. On 5 December an order was issued to seize all arms landed, except shot-guns, an exception which was cancelled some months later. It was no hard matter, however, on the wild and indented coast of Ireland to evade the watch set, and arms and ammunition continued to be smuggled into the country.

This was at the same time being flooded by the leaders of the Irish Volunteers with an astonishing mass of seditious literature, which the military censorship did little to check. Indeed, the anti-British propaganda was to a certain extent helped by the censorship; for this took notice only of matter which was judged to be of military importance, with the result that articles abusing the British Government and Army, or praising the gallantry and humanity of the Germans, gained an enhanced authority as having been 'passed by censor.' Occasionally these seditious papers, when they passed all bounds, were suppressed, a fate which befell *Irish Freedom* and the *Irish Worker* in December 1914; others, after their printers had been warned by the authorities, ceased to appear, as in the case of *Sinn Fein*, *Fianna Fail*, and *Ireland*. Their place was, however, speedily taken by others no less violent. Thus *Ireland*, after a few days' disappearance, was revived by Arthur Griffith as *Scissors and Paste*, which lived for three months and was suppressed on 2 March 1915. It consisted of cuttings from British and foreign newspapers 'selected for their derogatory references to the cause and military operations of the Allies and for their praise of the

methods and successes of the enemy.’¹ A rich crop of similar publications sprang up during the year 1915 and the early months of 1916. For the most part they were mere halfpenny ‘rags,’ badly printed on bad paper, and made up by the exuberance of their patriotic style for the entire absence in them of trustworthy information about anything, save the activities of the Sinn Fein branches—which constitutes almost their sole value to the historian. Only very few reached any fair standard of excellence, even from the point of view of the gutter journalist. The *Workers’ Republic*, of which the first number appeared on 30 May 1915 under the editorship of James Connolly, was certainly not despicable; for it preached pure Communism with ability and conviction and was later to become in Dublin the official organ of the Third International. On 26 June, too, Arthur Griffith issued the first number of his new paper *Nationality*, which became the most influential organ of an anti-Ally propaganda as able as it was unscrupulous; its editor knew exactly how to play upon the emotions of an ignorant public nurtured in an atmosphere of traditional grievance, which he studied to foster by publishing week by week such episodes in the past history of Ireland as were most likely to excite feeling against England, especially when painted in lurid colours and without any historical background. Meanwhile, the task of translating these emotions into action was undertaken by the organ of the Irish Volunteers, the *Irish Volunteer*, which published excellent articles on such subjects as hedge-fighting, trench-digging, and the art of guerilla warfare generally.

- The circulation of these papers was never large, but they passed from hand to hand, and their cumulative effect upon the ignorant masses was necessarily great. This effect was increased when the raising of the prices of the cheap English papers—such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Mirror*—which before the war had begun to be widely read in Ireland, practically stopped their circulation and left a free field to the cheap anti-British journals. The Government, in spite of frequent warnings, took no consistent action against them, and their circulation was never seriously interfered with. The result was what might have

¹ *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1914.

been expected. The mass of the Irish people, cut off from all true information as to what was happening in the great world, took their impressions of it from the broken lights which passed through the distorted prism of the Sinn Fein mind. They must not be blamed too severely if their attitude, sound enough at the outset, changed under the influence of a vision which had little relation to reality. Nor are the honest Sinn Feiners, who conjured up the vision, to be blamed if they used for what they believed to be the salvation of Ireland all the weapons which the folly and weakness of the Government had left in their hands. The blame rests mainly on a government which did not know how, or was afraid, to govern. It rests also upon the official Nationalist party and its organs in the Press; for these knew well the effect of weakness in the administration of such a country as Ireland, and yet, whenever the Government made ever so feeble an attempt to assert its authority, denounced it in unmeasured terms for no better reason than that they feared to lose their popularity.

In the course of his evidence before the Royal Commission on the rebellion in Ireland Major Price, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, said that whenever General Friend, who commanded the British forces in Ireland, did anything strong in the way of suppressing or deporting the Sinn Fein leaders and agitators, the Nationalists at once made trouble in Parliament and raised an outcry in their newspapers, saying that 'it was a monstrous thing to turn a man out of Ireland.' Upon this the Commissioners made the shrewd comment: 'Irishmen no doubt appreciate the maintenance of order, but they appear to have an inveterate prejudice against the punishment of disorder.'¹ The truth of this has received abundant illustration since.

¹ Royal Commission Report (Cd. 8279), p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

THE EASTER WEEK REBELLION

Supine attitude of the Government—Amendment of the Defence of the Realm Act—Trial by jury in Ireland—Atrophy of the law—Growth of Sinn Fein—Change in the character of the Gaelic League—The younger Catholic clergy and Sinn Fein—Preparations for a rising—The Easter Rebellion—Plan of the rising—Capture of the *Aud* and of Roger Casement—The rising in Dublin—Proclamation of the Republic—The military problem—The mob breaks loose—Burning of Sackville Street—Suppression of the rising in Dublin—The rebellion in the provinces—End of the rising—Punishment of the rebels—Effect of the executions—Mr. Asquith's visit to Dublin—Effect of this—Catholic Ireland turns Sinn Fein.

THROUGHOUT 1915 and the early months of 1916 the police continued to warn the Government of the dangerous character of the Sinn Fein agitation. At a meeting of the Council of the Irish Volunteers on 30 May 1915 a resolution, moved by Mr. Bulmer Hobson, in favour of an immediate rising had only been defeated by the casting vote of the chairman, Professor MacNeill; and in December the movement had become so menacing that the Under-Secretary, Sir Mathew Nathan, wrote to Mr. Birrell, pointing out the futility of the efforts of Messrs. Redmond and Dillon to minimise it, and the serious consequences that might easily ensue if it were not dealt with in time.¹ Lord Midleton, leader of the Southern Unionists, had already more than once urged upon the Chief Secretary the necessity for disarming the disloyal Volunteers and prosecuting the leaders. But none of these representations produced the slightest effect.² Indeed, so far from

¹ Royal Commission Report (Cd. 8279), p. 9.

² 'The witness (Major Price, intelligence officer of the Irish Military Headquarters) read an account of the parade of the Irish Volunteers in College Green on St. Patrick's Day, and said it was a translation of a letter to America dated April 14 last, written in Irish from St. Mary's College, Rathmines, Dublin. He had described that as an extremely bad letter, pointing to some outbreak during the summer of this year. The letter had been sent to the Chief Secretary, the Under Secretary,

the arm of the law being strengthened, it had been appreciably weakened by the passing on 16 March 1915 of the second Defence of the Realm Act, by which any British subject could claim trial by jury for an offence against the regulations. In Ireland this was tantamount to enacting that no offender should ever be convicted. For the Irish peasant remains as 'cautelous and wyly-headed' as he was in Edmund Spenser's day, and it is still true that 'the evidence being brought in by the base Irish people will be as deceitful as the verdicts: for they care much less than others what they swear.' It also remains true that 'defendants will plague such as were brought first to be of his jurye, and all such as made any party against him. And when he comes forth, he will make their cowes and garrans to walk [drive their cattle], yf he doe no other mischeif to their persons.' The effect of this, in addition to the widespread sympathy with any political offender, was that neither the juries nor the justices of the peace—very many of the latter men of inferior social position, drawn from the local supporters of the Nationalist party—could be trusted to return verdicts or decide in accordance with the evidence, however overwhelming this might be against the defendant.¹ At this time the only tribunals that could be relied upon were those presided over in the country districts by two resident magistrates, who constituted under the Crimes Act a special court in cases of riot or unlawful assembly, or by the metropolitan

and the Lord-Lieutenant. The Under Secretary wrote *re* the outbreak in the summer: "I look upon it as vague talk"; Mr. Birrell wrote: "The whole letter is rubbish"; and Lord Wimborne initialled it. "That is only typical," added the witness (Report of Enquiry by the Royal Commission, *The Times*, 26 May 1916).

¹ On 24 February 1915 John Hegarty and James Bolger were arrested for unlawful possession and larceny of high explosives. At the time of their arrest the D.R. Regulations provided for trial by court martial only, but as the Act was under amendment in Parliament decision in the case was deferred, and when it was decided to try the men the Amending Bill had passed and they had the right to be tried by jury. In April, at the Dublin City Commission, the Grand Jury returned a true bill against them. But when they came to be tried, Hegarty—in spite of overwhelming proof—was acquitted on the charge in connection with the explosives. On the further charge of writing and uttering seditious statements the jury disagreed; and the same thing happened at the June Commission. Both prisoners were then discharged and placed under military supervision. In Hegarty's bedroom the police had found nineteen sticks of gelatine dynamite, some fuse and 303 cartridges, and much seditious literature.

or stipendiary justices in Dublin and Belfast; and these tribunals had no power to impose a greater sentence than six months' hard labour. Such a sentence, even when the maximum penalty was imposed, was no more than an excellent advertisement for the patriot who had the good luck to receive it. In vain the heads of the Royal Irish Constabulary pointed out to the Government, in January 1916, that it was impossible to get juries to convict on the clearest evidence, that in various parts of Ireland the ordinary justices—whether through fear or favour—were just as bad, and that to meet the situation an amendment of the Defence of the Realm Act was absolutely essential. Conversations followed; but nothing was done.

Meanwhile the Sinn Fein organisation, helped mightily by the feeble efforts of the authorities to discourage it, was gaining strength and vigour. It had won a notable victory when at the annual assembly (Oireachtas) of the Gaelic League, held at Dundalk on 24–29 July 1915, the majority of the elected candidates for the executive committee were Sinn Feiners. The League thus became a political body, and its founder, Dr. Douglas Hyde, resigned the presidency as a protest against a change of character with which he, though an ardent Nationalist, had no sympathy. From this time onward the police reports record an ever increased activity on the part of Sinn Fein. The movement, in spite of the efforts of some of the bishops, had even been joined by many of the younger Roman Catholic clergy, the most conspicuous being Father Michael O'Flanagan, a priest from Roscommon, who on the anniversary of the 'Manchester martyrs,' declared that the work of the Irish people was to get rid of the connection with England, and that if there were no other way to get rid of it, he prayed for the victory of an enemy who would deprive England of her power. This utterance expressed views more widespread in the Roman Catholic Church than appeared on the surface. Apart from the Nationalist sympathies of the clergy, who were almost exclusively drawn from the peasant class, the victory of the Central Powers was ardently desired by many, who regarded France as an 'infidel' country and saw in the defeat of the Entente the best hope of restoring the temporal power of the

Papacy. The attitude of the bishops and of the mass of the secular priests towards the Government was still correct; but among the younger men a spirit of revolt was spreading, while in many of the religious houses prayers were devoutly offered for the success of the German arms.

It was now becoming clear to all who could read the somewhat obvious signs of the times that matters were coming to a crisis. In October it was reported that a rising had been planned by the Irish Volunteers ostensibly in opposition to conscription, an object which would have enlisted the sympathies of many Redmondite Volunteers, and on the 6th an attack on the Castle was actually rehearsed by them without interference on the part of the authorities. On 14 November a large parade of Irish Volunteers, attended by several priests, was held at Athenry, in Galway, at which shots were fired, a display of force which—according to the police reports—overawed the people, who ‘disapproved of the Sinn Fein policy, but were afraid to show this, as they had no confidence in either the will or the power of the Government to protect them.’¹ With the opening of 1916 the seditious activities increased. The *Workers’ Republic* for the 8th of January advertised the sympathy of the Citizen Army for the Irish Volunteers, and in an article of sinister significance quoted with approval the words of Fintan Lalor in the *Irish Felon* of 1848—that the one question was how best to kill or capture the 40,000 men ‘in the livery and service of England’ who were in occupation of Ireland. Large quantities of explosives were now continually being stolen from quarries and railway stores,² and it was noted as significant in connection with this that articles on the use of explosives were published in the *Irish Volunteer*. In February the Irish Volunteers began to take up ‘a truculent attitude’ towards recruiting meetings, men armed with guns and pikes attempting to break them up. On St. Patrick’s Day (17 March), the Irish National holiday, they held parades throughout

¹ *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1915.

² On 15 Jan., 1916, 90 lbs. of dynobol were stolen from the colliery of Messrs. Addie & Sons in Lanarkshire, and taken to Dublin. Two men were arrested for this.

the country, 4555 turning out in the provinces, and 1400 mustering in College Green in Dublin, and a little later the leaders issued manifestos affirming their right to be armed and declaring that any attempt to disarm them would be resisted by force.¹

It is now known that resistance to a threatened disarmament was to be the pretext for the rising planned for Easter 1916 in concert with the German Government. For some months before the rising a newspaper campaign was carried on suggesting that, if an attempt were made by the Government to disarm the Irish Volunteers, it could only arise from the deliberate intention of Englishmen to provoke disorder and bloodshed. On 19 April Alderman Thomas Kelly,² at a meeting of the Dublin Corporation, read a circular purporting to set out certain 'precautionary measures' sanctioned by the Irish Office on the recommendation of the General Officer commanding the forces in Ireland, measures involving the arrest of all Sinn Féin leaders and the occupation by the military of all important centres in Dublin.³ This document was a forgery, intended to justify in the eyes of the world the rising which had long since been arranged. Distributed in large quantities, it undoubtedly acted as one of the proximate causes of the outbreak. On the previous day, the 18th, news had reached Dublin Castle that a ship laden with arms had left Germany for Ireland on the 12th, accompanied by two German submarines, that it was due to arrive the 21st, and that a rising had been planned for Easter Eve. On the 22nd the *Irish Volunteer* announced under the heading 'Headquarters' Bulletin,' that arrangements were all but complete for 'a very interesting series of manœuvres at Easter,' and that the Dublin programme might well stand as a model for others. But on that very day it was also announced that the German ship *Aud*, disguised as a neutral merchantman and laden with munitions of war, had been captured by British destroyers and sunk by her own crew when being escorted into Queens-town. It was also announced that Sir Roger Casement,

¹ John MacNeill in the *Irish Volunteer*, 1 April 1916, and the O'Rahilly in the *Hibernian*, April 9.

² Elected Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1920 while in prison in England for sedition.

³ Report of the Royal Commission (Cd. 8279), p. 11.

who was to have been the titular head of the revolt, had been arrested at Banna on the coast of Kerry.

The story of Casement's arrest is one of the most singular in the whole history of the Irish revolution. He had travelled over in one of the German submarines with two companions, and was landed from this at Banna in a collapsible boat. Here, according to the carefully worked out plan, he was to have been met by a motor-car, which was to carry him to Dublin. The car never arrived. The driver took a wrong turning in the dark and dashed over Ballykissane Quay into the River Laune at the one hour in twelve when it chanced to be high tide and the creek was full of water. The chauffeur escaped, but the other three occupants of the car were drowned. Casement, thus left stranded on a desolate part of the coast, might yet have escaped by giving a plausible account of himself. Unfortunately for him, one of the coastguard knew him by sight. The rest of his story is soon told. He was taken to London, tried for high treason, convicted, and after being degraded from his knighthood was hanged on the 3rd of August.

To judge by the comments of some of his fellow-conspirators the loss of Casement was not in itself considered a heavy blow to the cause. It was otherwise with the loss of the *Aud*. The news of this had been communicated by Casement himself to Professor MacNeill, who thereupon issued orders countermanding the manœuvres, in the belief that all chance of a successful rising was now at an end. This action put the authorities, who were fairly accurately informed of what was going on, off their guard. Immediate danger was assumed to be at an end; no orders were given to bring troops into Dublin, and the leave of officers was not stopped, General Friend himself going away on a visit to England. Under the influence of James Connolly, however, the more violent section of the Volunteers—the Inner Council, of which MacNeill was kept in ignorance¹—decided to go on with the movement,

¹ John Devoy, editor of the *Gaelic American*, asserted that Professor MacNeill had been kept in ignorance of the projected rising until the evening of Good Friday, that 'he was at first shocked, but on hearing of the shipload of arms consented.' The rising was countermanded by MacNeill on receipt of a message from Casement that 'all was up' (*Documents relative to the Sinn Féin Movement* [Cmd. 1108], p. 19).

owing, it is said, to information having reached them on Sunday night that their headquarters, in which they had large stores of explosives and arms, were to be raided on Monday.

When, on the beautiful morning of Easter Monday, the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army paraded in various parts of Dublin the holiday crowds believed it to be no more than the usual 'play-boy' display. They were soon undeceived. The plan of the insurrection included the seizure of buildings and places commanding strategic positions in the city—the Castle, the Four Courts, the Post Office, Stephen's Green, certain factories, and, above all perhaps, Trinity College, which commands the intersection of all the main arteries in College Green. In the first surprise the insurgents succeeded in occupying the Post Office in Sackville Street, which gave them the command of the whole telegraph system,¹ the Four Courts, Stephen's Green, and Jacob's Biscuit Factory. A feeble attack on Trinity College was beaten off by a few soldiers and cadets of the Officers' Training Corps, while the Castle was made safe by the arrival of a small detachment of troops in the early afternoon. The first attack on the Castle had been signalled by the brutal murder of an unarmed policeman, and the same ruthlessness characterised the proceedings of the rebels elsewhere. Everyone in uniform was marked out for death, and among the victims were not only unarmed officers and police, but army doctors, wounded soldiers in hospital uniform, and elderly members of the Veterans' Corps, five of whom were fatally and many seriously wounded by a volley poured into their defenceless ranks, without warning, by Sinn Feiners in ambush in Haddington Road. In Stephen's Green a carter was shot in cold blood for protesting against the requisitioning of his cart to add to a barricade.²

It is not to be supposed that the young idealists who

¹ The situation was saved by the fact that the telephone exchange in Crown Alley, though commanded on all sides by rebel snipers, was not captured by the insurgents. The girl operators displayed great courage (*Irish Times*, 24 May 1916).

² A volley was deliberately fired at a motor in which a friend of the present writer, with his wife, was about to enter Stephen's Green. The lady was shot through the neck and her husband through the arm. An old man who had run out to warn them was pursued into his house, but what happened to him the writer does not know.

were the nominal leaders of the rebellion all approved of this butchery—at the headquarters in the Post Office British officers were held prisoners and treated kindly enough—but they had unloosed forces which they were unable to control. As soon as it was clear that the city was at the mercy of the armed rebels the police, who were unarmed, were withdrawn from the streets. The underworld of Dublin seized its opportunity. A seething mob issued from the slums, invaded the main thoroughfares and looted the shops; but for the fact that most of the banks and some of the best shopping centres were commanded by the rifles of Trinity College, the loss and destruction of property would have been greater than it was. Presently the terror of fire was added to mob violence. How the fire originated is not known; it may well have been the work of irresponsible incendiaries among the looting mob. However this may be, on the night of 26–27 April several fires broke out in this quarter; the fire brigade could not get to work because it was fired on by the rebels; and in the end a considerable part of Sackville Street, including the General Post Office, together with part of the surrounding area, was reduced to ruins.

The rebellion was heralded on the morning of the outbreak by a proclamation ‘to the people of Ireland’ issued in the name of ‘the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic.’ After denouncing the long usurpation of the right to govern Ireland by a foreign people, this proclaimed Ireland a sovereign and independent State, adding that ‘the Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman.’

Having organized and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organizations, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organizations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

The confidence would, perhaps, not have been misplaced had the original plot not miscarried. If the unbroken

strength of the Irish Volunteers had answered the call, it is probable that all Dublin would have been occupied by them, and the task of putting down the rebellion rendered tenfold more difficult, if not impossible. As it was, the prompt concentration of such troops as were available¹ enabled the authorities to maintain their position in the city, pending the arrival of reinforcements with artillery in sufficient numbers to enable them to surround and isolate the rebel detachments, and so reduce them without undue destruction of life and property.

The task was one of immense difficulty. The rebel leaders had laid their plans ably enough. Apart from the occupation of strategic positions in the heart of the city itself, they had posted detachments in hastily fortified houses commanding the approaches from the port of Kingstown, while armies of snipers occupied the roofs everywhere. Their failure to capture Trinity College and the Castle, however, seriously affected their plans, and by midday on the 25th the military had succeeded in cutting off the rebels on the north side of the Liffey from those on the south by a line of posts established from King's Bridge Station via the Castle to Trinity College. Towards the evening of the 25th the 178th Infantry Brigade began to arrive at Kingstown from England, and was at once directed on Dublin. It was during this advance that the military suffered the heaviest casualties. This was especially the case near the bridge over the canal at Lower Mount Street, where the rebels had entrenched themselves in the schools and houses commanding its approach. Ordered to carry this position at all costs, the 7th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters attacked it in successive waves, and succeeded in carrying it, but at heavy cost—4 officers being killed and 14 wounded, while of other ranks 216 were killed and wounded.² Meanwhile heavy fighting had been taking place in the Sackville Street quarter, where the destruction of Liberty

¹ On the morning of the second day of the rebellion (the 25th) the forces in the Dublin area consisted of some 2300 men of the Dublin garrison, the Curragh mobile column of 1500 dismounted cavalrymen, and 840 men of the 25th Irish Reserve Infantry Brigade.

² It was presumably in commemoration of this affair, and not of that of 21 November 1920, that the name of 'Mount Street' was painted on one of the armoured cars made over by the British to the Provisional Government after the treaty in 1921.

Hall by fire from the gunboat *Helga* enabled the troops to make progress. It was not, however, till the morning of the 28th, when General Sir John Maxwell arrived to take command, that troops were present in sufficient numbers to carry out the plan of encirclement efficiently. A complete cordon was now established round Dublin, and at the same time detachments were ordered to clear the various quarters of the rebels by a steady advance from house to house and street to street. This street fighting was exceedingly trying to the troops, nearly all young recruits, exposed as they were to fire from snipers on all sides, and their courage, discipline, and humanity gained them the admiration even of their opponents.¹ The fact that the Volunteers were for the most part not in uniform made the fighting doubly difficult, for it was easy for the rebels, when hard pressed, to hide or throw away their arms and pretend to be innocent non-combatants.

On the 29th, the infantry having now been reinforced by a battery of field artillery, the situation of the rebels became hopeless, and at 2 o'clock Pearse surrendered unconditionally, and in the presence of Sir John Maxwell wrote and signed notices to the various 'commandants' to follow his example. Thomas MacDonagh, who commanded the garrison of Jacob's Biscuit Factory, at first refused to surrender except on conditions, and two Franciscan friars were deputed to inform General Maxwell of his desire to negotiate. The request was refused, and on the 30th he too surrendered unconditionally. This practically ended the rebellion in the city of Dublin. Throughout the night of 30 April–1 May, indeed, isolated rebels continued to snipe the troops, but during the following day these were gradually cleared out, and, in conjunction with the police, a systematic house to house search for rebels and arms was continued.

Meanwhile, the rebellion in the provinces had met with even less success. In general, the country remained absolutely quiet. In Kerry, which was to have been the focus of the rising, the capture of the consignment of

¹ Mr. James Stephens, in his *Insurrection in Dublin*, p. 78, said that there was 'no bitterness . . . due to the more than admirable behaviour of the troops you sent over.' In his introduction, written later, he says that 'it is no longer true that there is no bitterness in Ireland,' but he ascribes this to the execution of the rebel leaders (p. xiv).

German arms nipped the insurrection in the bud, and it was only in four counties—Dublin, Wexford, Galway, and Louth—that the Volunteers rose in arms. In Louth the rebels accomplished nothing but a single dastardly crime. A party of Irish Volunteers started on the 23rd from Dundalk to Slane, where they spent the night. On the 24th, learning that the Republic had been proclaimed in Dublin, they proceeded to commandeer motor-cars and carts which they met on the way, seriously wounding a farmer who refused to stop. At Castlebellingham they crowned their achievements by placing Lieutenant Dunville, Grenadier Guards, whose motor they had seized, and Constable Magee against some railings and shooting them both. In County Dublin a more serious affair took place on the 27th. A large party of rebels, led by Thomas Ashe, having being deterred by the sight of twenty soldiers and eight police, and the more distant vision of two gun-boats on their way to the Skerries, from carrying out their plan of cutting the English cable at Howth, decided to attack the police barracks at Ashbourne in County Meath. Hearing of this attack, County Inspector Gray, with fifty-four men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, went north from Navan in motor-cars to engage them. Close to Ashbourne this party fell into an ambush. The Volunteers numbered some four hundred, and the police, after fighting for five hours until their ammunition was exhausted, were forced to surrender. They had lost one officer and six men killed, and their Inspector and fourteen men wounded. In view of later happenings it is worth recording that the parish priest showed great courage in facing the ambushers and beseeching them to desist.

This was the only serious affair in the provinces; for though the Volunteers assembled in Galway, a single shell dropped into the middle of their camp near the sea at Oranmore by a British destroyer sufficed to disperse them.¹ In Wexford the rebellion broke out on the

¹ The centres of the rebellion in Galway were Athenry and Loughrea. These were described by County Inspector Clayton in his evidence before the Royal Commission as 'the black spots in Galway.' 'There were secret societies in this district at all times for years past. They were the centres of much of the land agitation, and many cold-blooded murders were committed there' (reported in the *Sunday Independent*, Dublin, 28 May 1916).

27th April at Enniscorthy, and spread to Ferns, both places being in the hands of the Volunteers until the arrival of the military on the 1st May. But the police reported that the movement was unpopular in the county generally, and that large numbers of people assembled in arms to assist the authorities. The surrender of the rebels at Enniscorthy was the closing incident of the rebellion. It had cost the lives of 450 people—soldiers, police, and civilians—while 2614 were wounded.

As soon as the rising in Dublin had been crushed mobile columns, consisting of a company of infantry, a squadron of cavalry, an eighteen-pounder gun, and an armoured car, were sent to the disturbed parts of Ireland, a definite area being allotted to each. In co-operation with the police, these arrested dangerous Sinn Feiners and all those who were known to have taken part in the rising. On 25 April the right to try offenders against the Defence of the Realm Regulations had been restored to the military authorities by Royal Proclamation, and field general courts martial were at once constituted for the trial of the rebels. In all 3430 men and 79 women had been arrested, and of these 1424 men and 73 women were released after inquiry; 170 men and one woman (Countess Markievicz) were tried by courts martial, and of these 159 men and the woman were convicted. The remainder of the prisoners, 1836 men and five women, were sent to England and there interned. Of those convicted by courts martial fifteen were sentenced to death and executed.¹

It may be doubted whether even now the world at large knows how great was the danger to the cause of the Allies of the Sinn Fein revolt, or how near this came to success. The British Government, either for reasons connected with the war or because it was ashamed to confess its own ineptitude, minimised its seriousness, with the result that foreign Governments and peoples were left under the impression that savage punishment had been

¹ The leaders executed were the seven who had signed the declaration proclaiming the formation of the Irish Republic, viz. P. H. Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett, Edmund Kent, Thomas J. Clarke, James Connolly, and John McDermott, together with such prominent leaders as Edward Daly, William Pearse, Cornelius Colbert, J. J. Heaston, Michael O'Hanrahan, John McBride, and Michael Mallin. To these must be added Thomas Kent, who was executed for the murder of Head Constable Rowe at Fermoy on May 2.

inflicted for what had been little more than a street riot. The Sinn Fein legend of 'the brutal heel of British tyranny,' afterwards developed and spread broadcast in so masterly a fashion, was thus given a good start. Yet the rebellion was certainly no mere desperate adventure of a few hot-headed youths, which was from the first foredoomed to failure. It had been carefully planned with the aid of the best military brains in Europe, and but for a series of accidents—fortunate or unfortunate, according to the point of view—it might very well have succeeded in effecting all that the Germans expected of it, namely, the enforced withdrawal of a very large body of British troops from the Western front at a very critical period of the war. As a result of John Redmond's pledge, Ireland had been all but completely stripped of troops, and the few that remained were scattered in widely separated camps and depôts. Artillery there was next to none. According to the original Sinn Fein plan, there was to have been a simultaneous and general rising; the Republic was to be proclaimed in Dublin; the armed forces of the Crown, soldiers and constabulary, were to be overwhelmed piecemeal and exterminated; and the world was to be confronted with the accomplished fact of an Ireland republican and independent. In the probable event of a counter-blow from England, and the impossibility of holding Dublin and the more exposed districts of the East, the centre of resistance was to be shifted to the wild and mountainous regions of the West, with Limerick as its principal *point d'appui* and the Shannon as its chief line of defence. Later experience has shown how formidable a problem would have been presented to the Government had this plan succeeded. That it failed was not due to any foresight on the part of Mr. Asquith's Government.

The same lack of foresight continued after as before, and never was a great opportunity more disastrously thrown away. The collapse of the rising left the British Government the unchallenged arbiter of the fate of Ireland. When, on the 27th of April, John Redmond expressed in the House of Commons his feeling of detestation and horror for the rebellion, his claim to speak not only for the Nationalist party but also for the overwhelming majority of the

Irish people was justified. The British troops had been welcomed in Dublin with every manifestation of relief and joy, and the fighting was hardly ended before corporations all over the country were passing resolutions condemning the folly and wickedness of the rebels.¹ This attitude was mainly due to the belief that the rebellion had indefinitely postponed all prospect of Home Rule; for no one in Ireland could imagine that after such an object-lesson—the moral of which was duly pointed in Ulster—the British Government would venture to weaken the Union, and it was generally thought that it would seize the occasion to extend the Military Service Act to Ireland, the people being in no mood to resist. It was, in short, a moment when a wise and consistent policy might have settled the Irish question for a hundred years to come, when it would have been possible to have captured Irish sentiment by a policy of magnanimous conciliation, or to have crushed out all opposition by the Machiavellian method of ‘cruelty well applied.’ The Government wavered between the two policies, and achieved the usual results of half measures. Within a few weeks popular sentiment in Ireland had completely swung round, and the rebellion was converted, from the Sinn Fein point of view, from a disgraceful failure into a glorious success.

One cause of this change, though not the main one, was undoubtedly the execution of the leaders. The Irish, though they have no native horror of violence and murder, cannot bear the long drawn out procedure of a trial for life or death; their sympathy is always with the criminal,

¹ The attitude of Nationalists towards Sinn Fein before the rebellion, and generally the temper of politics in Ireland, are well illustrated by the following extracts from an account in the *Irish Times* of Jan. 29, 1916, of an attempt made by Sinn Feiners to give a concert at Carrickmore in Tyrone:

‘Desperate fighting of a hand-to-hand character ensued, both within and without the hall, but for the most part the Sinn Feiners held the school, while the Nationalists remained outside. . . . The Sinn Feiners cheered for the Kaiser, and there were shouts of “Carson,” whilst the Nationalists cheered for the Allies and the constabulary. Then the Nationalists, having gathered all their reinforcements, delivered a united and determined attack on the roof, doors and windows of the school. . . . An indescribable scene followed. . . . There were shrieks for the Kaiser from the Sinn Feiners, and counter-cheers for the Allies, King George, and the Constabulary from the Nationalists. The fighting continued till half-past nine o’clock, when the Sinn Feiners decided to abandon the concert, and they were escorted home by the police.’

especially if his crime be a political one ; and the slow and secret procedure of the courts martial, with the execution day by day of small batches of the condemned men, revolted every instinct of their nature. Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, publicly protested against the doing to death of these ' poor boys,' and stories flew from mouth to mouth of their noble bearing in the face of death, stories at least in some cases well founded. That the sentences, according to the codes of all civilised nations were just, made no difference. Public opinion swung suddenly and violently round. The wicked fools of yesterday became the immortal heroes of to-day, and the book-shops of Dublin, in an incredibly short time, reflected the new public sentiment by filling their windows with the portraits and works of the ' martyrs.'

To this sentimental appeal a practical one, even more potent, was presently added. ' No man,' said Lord Burleigh, ' loves one the better for giving him the bastinado though with never so little a cudgel. . . . Men's natures are apt to strive not only against the present smart but to revenge by-past injury, though they be never so well contented thereafter,' for when opportunity offers ' they will remember not the after slacking but the former binding ; and so much the more when they shall imagine this relenting to proceed from fear ; for it is the poison of all government when the subject thinks the prince doth anything more out of fear than favour.' This was a poison which had operated long and constantly in the Irish body politic, and it operated now. Mr. Asquith, perhaps thinking that the executions already carried out had been sufficient to strike terror and prove the power of the Government, determined to try a policy of generous conciliation. He was influenced in this by the attitude of certain of the Nationalist members of Parliament who, feeling that their authority in Ireland was in danger, showed a disposition to ' hedge ' in the matter of the rebellion. On the 11th of May John Dillon, Redmond's principal lieutenant, moved the adjournment of the House in order to discuss the executions, and in the course of a violent speech, in which he accused the Government and the military of washing out the life-work of the Nationalist party in ' a sea of blood,' he took occasion to say that he was ' proud of the rebels.'

In his reply Mr. Asquith defended General Maxwell and the troops from the wild charges brought against them, and announced that he himself was going to Ireland that evening to consult the civil and military authorities, with a view to arriving at some arrangement for the future government of Ireland that would commend itself to Irishmen of all parties and to the House of Commons.

The days spent by Mr. Asquith in Dublin, the 12th to the 18th of May, mark an epoch in Irish history. The mere fact of having brought the Prime Minister in a flutter to Ireland was in itself a triumph for Sinn Féin. His attitude while there accentuated this triumph. Irishmen noted with astonishment his capacity for absorbing the national spirit, and with anger or cynical amusement his efforts to conciliate the national sentiment. Acting presumably upon the principle that those who are whole need not the physician, he ostentatiously avoided any public recognition of the part played by those Irishmen, whether soldiers, police, or civilians, who had proved their loyalty to the Crown, and reserved his official attentions for its declared enemies. The climax came when, in addition to talking with 'representative exponents of various shades and complexions of Irish opinion,' he visited the prisons and 'talked with the utmost freedom to a large number of those who had been arrested and detained.'¹ The effect was immediate. The prisoners, who had been depressed and in some cases penitent and in tears, saw that they had not fought in vain, and Mr. Asquith had scarce left the prison before they were insulting their guards, throwing up their caps and shouting victory.² The effect was completed when, after his return to London, the Prime Minister announced to the House of Commons (25 May) that the dominant impression left on his mind by his visit was 'the breakdown of the existing machinery of Irish government,' and that he had commissioned Mr. Lloyd George to negotiate with the Irish party leaders with a view to a compromise such as would enable the Government of Ireland Act to be brought into immediate operation.

The rebellion was thus advertised to the world as the most successful failure in history. So far from destroying

¹ Mr. Asquith's statement in the House of Commons, 25 May 1916.

² From information supplied by an official eye-witness.

the prospects of Home Rule, it had brought that blessing within measurable distance, and what years of constitutional agitation had failed to secure had been secured by one short week's armed argument. It was in the eyes of the Irish people, which loves adventure and follows success, a triumphant vindication of the Sinn. Fein attitude and policy. All over the country, always excepting the Protestant North, there was a sudden and violent swing round into the rebel camp. The confidential reports of the police from the various counties at the end of 1916 are unanimous as to this change and its causes. 'The people generally,' writes one County Inspector, 'had no sympathy with the rebels until after Mr. Asquith's speech in the House of Commons and his visit to Ireland, which, coupled with the execution of the leaders, completely changed the feelings of large numbers of people.'¹ 'At the time of the rebellion,' writes another, 'the people generally condemned it, but the speeches of Mr. Dillon and others in the House of Commons on the subject, and the visit of the Prime Minister to Ireland in order to effect a settlement of the Home Rule question caused a strong reaction in Nationalist circles in favour of the rebels, as it was felt that the rebellion had done more than ten years of constitutional agitation to convince the Government of the urgent necessity of Home Rule.'² 'Then came the visit of the Prime Minister to Ireland,' writes a third, 'his statement in the House of Commons, the announcement that Home Rule must immediately be granted, followed by Mr. Dillon's speech in the House eulogising the rebels, and finally the letters of the Bishop of Limerick. These changed the whole feeling. The Sinn Feiners from being objects of contempt became heroes.'³

¹ *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1916. Report from Kilkenny.

² *Ibid.* Report from Monaghan.

³ *Ibid.* Report from Tyrone.

CHAPTER V

THE 'PARTITION OF IRELAND'

Negotiations for a settlement—Question of the exclusion of Ulster—Breakdown of the negotiations—Mr. Duke Chief Secretary—Decline of John Redmond's influence—He denounces 'conscription' for Ireland and 'martial law'—Reply of the Government—Character of 'martial law' in Ireland—Revival of Sinn Fein—Activity of the seditious Press—The United States enter the War—Sinn Fein policy of passive resistance—and of appeal to the Peace Conference—Denunciation of war taxation and the 'starvation of Ireland'—Sinn Fein in the United States—and in Germany—Sinn Fein and the Nationalists—Mr. Lloyd George Prime Minister—He defines his Irish policy—Protest of the Nationalists—Agitation for an Amnesty—New organisation of Sinn Fein.

A NEW and very effective weapon was added to the armoury of Sinn Fein as the result of Mr. Asquith's continued efforts to effect a settlement. At this time the intrigues were in progress which, soon afterwards, carried Mr. Lloyd George to the premiership; and when Mr. Asquith announced in the House of Commons that he had charged his brilliant lieutenant and rival with the task of securing a working compromise between the views of the Ulstermen and those of the Nationalists, it was whispered that this was but a Machiavellian device to discredit him by setting him to solve a problem which in the past had wrecked so many reputations for statesmanship. But if it was a trap, Mr. Lloyd George was far too astute to fall into it. He followed the plan which he had always pursued when acting as mediator between conflicting interests; he negotiated with the parties separately, and produced a seeming agreement by a dialectical process familiar to theologians. The result was a personal triumph for himself; the discredit, when disillusionment followed, fell upon the Prime Minister.

On the 10th of June John Redmond announced to a meeting of his supporters in Dublin that Mr. Lloyd George had proposed in the name of the Government that the

Home Rule Act should be brought into immediate operation, but that an Amending Bill should be introduced providing for the retention of the Irish members at Westminster, and for the exclusion of six Ulster counties from the operation of the Act during the continuance of the war and for a short period after it. On the 12th the Ulster Unionist Council, whilst re-affirming its unalterable objection to Home Rule, decided in the interests of the Empire to give full authority to Sir Edward Carson to continue negotiations with Mr. Lloyd George on the basis of the definitive exclusion of the six counties. Mr. Joseph Devlin used all his great influence to persuade his followers in Belfast to agree to Mr. Redmond's compromise; and on 23 June a meeting of Nationalists from the six counties decided by a large majority to accept the principle of temporary exclusion.

What followed is somewhat obscure. It is clear, however, that there must, from the first, have been a misunderstanding or what might be regarded as a misrepresentation; for the Ulstermen were as little disposed as ever to come under a Home Rule Government, except by their own consent. By the Southern Unionists, on the other hand, and the large body of those living in the counties of Ulster not excluded, the suggested compromise was viewed with dismay, and numerous meetings of protest were held at which it was pointed out, with some force, that in making special arrangements for the six counties the northern Protestants had been guilty of breaking the solemn Covenant to which they had subscribed three years earlier.¹ Whatever the reason may have been—original misunderstanding, or subsequent Unionist pressure within the Cabinet—the statement made by Mr. Asquith on 10 July as to the suggested settlement, and still more Lord Lansdowne's glosses on it in the House of Lords, roused indignant protests from John Redmond and his followers, for it became known that a pledge had been given to Sir Edward Carson that the six counties would be definitively excluded from the operation of the Act and could not be

¹ The Ulster argument was that they were keeping the Covenant in the spirit, if not in the letter, because a separate Ulster Government, with a Catholic minority under it, would be a better guarantee for the just treatment of Protestants in Catholic Ireland than if the whole Protestant body were to form a hopeless minority in a Catholic State.

included again without a fresh Bill. This, together with Lord Lansdowne's statement that General Maxwell would be retained in his command, that the Defence of the Realm Regulations would be strengthened, and that the prisoners would not be amnestied, was described by Redmond as an insult to Ireland and tantamount to a declaration of war against the Irish people; he demanded strict adherence to the basis of the negotiations to which he had agreed, and announced that any departure from this would bring the negotiations to an end. Matters came to a crisis on the 24th, when, in answer to Redmond, the Prime Minister said he would not introduce any Bill unless there were substantial agreement between the parties. This meant the collapse of the whole effort, Mr. Lloyd George asserting that it was impossible to bring the Act into operation during the war except on the terms announced by the Prime Minister. Redmond, for his part, pointed out the 'deplorable effects in Ireland' of the failure of the Government to carry out the terms of the agreement, a failure which was bound to increase Irish suspicion of their good faith, and ended by announcing that, while he would continue to support the war, he would henceforth hold himself free to criticise the conduct of the Government.

The temper of the Nationalists was not improved by Mr. Asquith's announcement on 31 July that Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Duke, a Unionist, had been appointed to succeed Mr. Birrell as Chief Secretary, and by the further appointment of Mr. James Campbell, junior member for Trinity College and Sir Edward Carson's lieutenant in the Ulster movement, as Irish Attorney-General. This 'restoration of the Castle régime, with a Unionist executive' was, in John Redmond's language, another insult to Ireland, and on 1 August a Nationalist meeting in Dublin protested against it.

The only gainers by Mr. Asquith's unfortunate attempts at a settlement by compromise were the Sinn Feiners, who from this moment never allowed the Irish people to forget that Redmond and his party had consented to the 'partition of Ireland,' a catch-word of which the constant repetition was not the least of the factors which contributed to the disappearance of the Nationalist party as a force in Irish politics. Redmond did his best to undo these

disastrous effects of his untimely moderation. When, in the autumn, the question of extending the Military Service Act to Ireland was again raised, and its extension strongly supported by Irish Unionists, he threw himself into violent opposition. To his constituents at Waterford, on 6 October, he said that 'conscription' was the most fatal thing that could happen to Ireland, and on the 18th, two days after the publication of the report of the Royal Commission on the shooting of Mr. Sheehy Skeffington,¹ he moved a resolution in the House of Commons practically amounting to a vote of censure; charged the Government with maintaining in Ireland a system of administration inconsistent with the principles for which the Allies were fighting; demanded the recall of General Maxwell and the abrogation of martial law; asked for the release of 500 untried prisoners, and the treatment of the rest as prisoners of war; and ended by adjuring the Government to show its trust of the Irish people by putting the Home Rule Act into immediate operation.

To all this Mr. Asquith replied, with perfect accuracy, that though martial law existed in Ireland, it was not in operation, the occasional suspension of the right to trial by jury being under the Defence of the Realm Act. Mr. Duke, the Chief Secretary, said with equal truth that the real obstacle to Home Rule was the disagreement among Irishmen, and that the only chance of obtaining it was for them to present an agreed scheme to Parliament. As for 'martial law,' peaceful Irish subjects must be protected, and there were men still free in Ireland who were ready at the

¹ Mr. Sheehy Skeffington, with two others, had been captured in the streets by a small party of soldiers under Captain Bowen Colthurst and taken as prisoner to Portobello Barracks. All three were subsequently shot by order of Bowen Colthurst. This officer was tried by court-martial and was adjudged to be insane; his mind had been affected at the front, he had been sent to Dublin to 'rest,' and it was held that the horror and excitement of the outbreak of the rebellion had developed what the evidence showed to be religious mania. The Royal Commission found that Mr. Skeffington had no connection with the rebellion, that he was in principle a 'pacifist,' and that he had been engaged in making an appeal to prevent looting and violence. He belonged, however, to the Sinn Féin organisation, had taken an active part in the Republican propaganda, and had lectured in the United States against the cause of the Allies. In view of the fact that Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington, during her lecture tour in America, denounced the 'cruel *English* eyes' of the unfortunate young officer who killed her husband, it is necessary to add that he was not English, but belonged to a very old Irish family.

first opportunity to repeat the proceedings of Easter week.

That this was true and that these men were still looking for help to Germany is proved by the intercepted correspondence of Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador in Washington. 'No parades of Volunteers are allowed,' wrote an anonymous correspondent to him on 30 June 1916. 'The organisation is supposed to be dead, but they are keeping in touch with each other and their spirit is excellent. Very few arms have been given up in the country and no munitions. . . . Though many arms are hidden safely, there are not sufficient for future offence, unless supplemented. . . . Our present position is this : There is not a leader left. The men are there and the women too, full of spirit, but all the real brains of the organisation are dead or locked up. Anyone who could voice the desires of the country to be represented at the Peace Conference is not here to do it. What we need now is to get into touch with America if possible. Tell John Devoy and the Clan na Gael that our hearts are full of courage, but that we count on them to help us.' The fear that a measure of Home Rule might be granted and that John Redmond might go to the Peace Conference as Ireland's representative torments the writer : 'Better Martial Law and General Maxwell.'¹

There was, in fact, no martial law in Ireland ; for martial law implies the entire supersession of the ordinary law, of which Mr. Duke, the new Chief Secretary, was a meticulously jealous guardian. The result of the consequent friction between the civil and military authorities presently became apparent ; on 5 November General Maxwell was recalled, under pressure from the Nationalist members in Parliament ; and Sinn Fein, which had fallen silent during the months succeeding the rebellion, gathered courage to revive its active propaganda.

On 9 December the *Irishman* explained the policy of Sinn Fein to be 'a combination of passive resistance to foreign aggression and of a co-ordinated development of national resources, together with the fostering of national characteristics. It rejects parliamentarism and other such methods, and seeks in a National Council a lever to

¹ *Documents relative to the Sinn Fein Movement* [Cmd. 1108], p. 17.

upset the whole foreign administration of the country.'¹ On the 30th *New Ireland* appeared with an article deploring the life-long imprisonment of John MacNeill, who 'saw in the Irish Volunteers the only protection against the armed violence of the Primrose League and its dupes,' another—entitled 'Ireland's Revenge'—ascribing the refusal of conscription in Australia to the effect of the Easter Week rebellion, and yet another ('What will Ireland do?') in which a Catholic curate argued that it was not to Ireland's interest to help to 'put down Germany' and compared the lot of Ireland under the British unfavourably with that of Belgium or Poland under the Germans.

Early in 1917 the police reported that the seditious press was becoming very daring and that its influence was probably increasing. On 17 February a new Sinn Féin weekly, the *Irish World*, made its appearance, and on the same day Arthur Griffith resumed the publication of *Nationality* with an article in which he denounced John Redmond for the speech of 3 May 1916 in which he had spoken of the 'guilt' of the instigators and promoters of the rebellion. All this, in the language of the police reports, was 'a bold renewal of the campaign carried out before the rebellion' and both General Sir Brian Mahon, who had succeeded General Maxwell in the Irish command, and the heads of the police pressed the Chief Secretary to take strong measures. Mr. Duke, however, declined to direct the seizure of these papers, and the seditious propaganda, as in Mr. Birrell's day, went on practically unchecked.

The year 1917 was, indeed, an extremely critical one for the Union Government in Ireland, and saw the beginnings of that policy of alternate concession and repression which was to lead to the disastrous situation of 1920 and 1921. The entry of the United States into the war on the side of the Entente was, of course, a blow to the Sinn Féiners, for it wrecked their hopes of any direct intervention of Washington in their favour. They did not, however, give up the idea of securing separate representation for Ireland at the Peace Conference, and meanwhile they

¹ Note that, with the exception of the Chief Secretary, the whole administration of the country was at that time in the hands of Irishmen. The Castle is the name given to the whole group of buildings occupying the site of the old royal castle in Dublin, including the Lord-Lieutenant's town residence and the Irish Government offices.

revived the plan of making 'English' government in the island impossible by an organised system of passive resistance to, and boycotting of, the authorities. To make this system a success, however, it was necessary to enlist the active sympathy of the mass of the agricultural population, and to this task they set themselves. The old motives of agrarian discontent were no longer available for political purposes; for owing to the rise in the value of produce the small holders were enjoying an immense prosperity; it was only here and there that the police reported agrarian disturbances arising out of the agitation for the breaking up of the grazing lands; and everywhere the new rules made by the Government for bringing land under tillage were being faithfully carried out. It was necessary to find other means of appealing to the Irish farmers and peasants, and they found these means in the possible effects upon Ireland of Great Britain's need for men, money, and food to carry on the great struggle, which had reached its most critical stage with the beginning of the unrestricted submarine war by Germany in February of this year. The 'anti-conscription' cry had already served its purpose. To this were now added appeals to the farmers on the ground that Ireland would be bled white by war-taxation and starved in order that the hated British might be fed.

Of these cries the most effective, next to 'conscription,' was the promise that independent Ireland would be relieved not only of war-taxation but also of the whole burden of the national debt,¹ and there can be no doubt that it largely contributed to the later victories of Sinn Féin at the polls. But more immediate and obvious in effect was the agitation against the system of food-control which the submarine menace had made necessary. 'The "clutching-hand" is out to capture our food,' was the cry;² the maximum

¹ 'Ireland repudiates financial responsibility for the payment of interest on England's war loan and proposes to back her repudiation with all the forces at her command' (Arthur Griffith in *Nationality*, 24 Feb. 1917).

'The club formed at Castlemahon, Newcastle-west, is urging the local farmers to consider the present taxation, and the trend of future taxation. Other districts, please copy this headline' (*Nationality*, 9 June 1917).

'Ireland will be bled of all her resources, and a terrible emigration will ensue, if she continues bound to England. If she establishes her freedom, she will be the only nation in Europe free of a national debt' (Mr. Darrell Figgis at Ennis, July 4, 1915.—*Irish Times*, 5 July).

² *Nationality*, 4 Aug. 1917.

meat prices would destroy the cattle trade ; and the export of bacon and butter to England would lead to starvation in Ireland. All this had its effect. The Government, following the traditional policy of humouring Ireland, excluded her from the more drastic conditions of the food-control, forbade the free export of bacon and butter to England, and allowed the Irish to eat as much as they liked, while England went hungry. It is not too much to say that during the critical years of the war Ireland was not only more peaceful and prosperous than she had ever been, but was the only peaceful and prosperous country in Europe. To the Irish countryside, flooded with unaccustomed wealth, scarce a rumour penetrated of the momentous happenings in the great world beyond.

But Sinn Fein, encouraged by the almost complete immunity of its press—which even the censorship could only control within very narrow limits—continued its preparations for war. The beginning of the year saw the launching of the official Sinn Fein organisation in the United States (18 January) under the auspices of the Friends of Irish Freedom, and a beginning was made for that vast propaganda, financed by all the enemies of Great Britain, which was to flood the world with the most amazing myths about conditions and happenings in Ireland. The new *point d'appui* in America, however, was to be used for more than propaganda, and early in February the Government learned that the Germans had planned to land another huge consignment of arms and ammunition on the coast of Galway between the 21st and 25th of the month. 'Adequate arrangements were made, and the consignments did not reach Ireland'; but it was clear that Sinn Fein, through its agents in America, was still in touch with Berlin and still hoped for a German victory. It was this hope which inspired the Sinn Fein Executive with the idea of drawing up a statement of 'Ireland's Case for a Peace Conference,' claiming sovereign independence, and demanding from the Powers to be assembled that 'that sovereignty be now recognised and established under their security.'¹ In Germany the 'Case' had a sympathetic reception and

¹ Copies of this 'Case' were seized by the police at the Sinn Fein headquarters in Dublin on 18 May 1918.

shortly after the American declaration of war (April 4) a 'German-Irish Society' was founded in Berlin by Professor Kuno Meyer acting in concert with St. John Gaffney, a former American consul, and Dr. George Chatterton-Hill, 'a *soi-disant* Irishman, born in Madras, educated at Geneva, and resident for many years in Germany.'¹ Its organ, *Irische Blätter*, held out the pleasing prospect to Ireland of being made self-reliant 'by the employment of efficient German methods of education, industrial organisation and military training.'

The Irish Nationalist party viewed with alarm the growing influence of Sinn Fein, whose organs—presently increased by a new batch of weeklies: *The Leader*, *Irish Opinion*, *The Irish Nation*, and *The Phoenix*—poured derision and abuse upon John Redmond and his followers. Mr. John Dillon took the lead in the effort to counter this campaign by a violence of language scarcely second to that of Sinn Fein. He declared publicly that he had never stood on a recruiting platform, and never would.² He had gained a triumph when, in response to his pressure, Mr. Duke announced on 22 December 1916 that the six hundred rebel prisoners interned in Wales were to be unconditionally released. But in vain did the Nationalist organ, the *Freeman's Journal*, try to make capital out of this for the parliamentary party; the Sinn Fein papers scoffed at its claims to have effected anything; it was fear, and fear alone, which had dictated the action of the Government; 'one direct appeal to America by the Dublin Corporation effected more than all the "blethers" at Westminster';³ and with one voice they clamoured for the immediate release of all the condemned rebels.

The release of the interned rebels was greeted by Sinn Fein as a triumph; its propaganda increased in boldness; and on 5 February it gained its first victory at the polls by the return of Count George Plunkett, father of one of the executed leaders of the Easter Week rebellion,

¹ See *Documents relative to the Sinn Fein Movement* [Cmd. 1108], Appendix C.

² This is hard to reconcile with other evidence. The County Inspector of the R.I.C. in Limerick, for instance, reported that on 25 November 1914, at a review of Volunteers at New Pallas, John Dillon urged enlistment and denounced the attitude of Sinn Fein towards the War. *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1914, p. 14.

³ *New Ireland*, quoted in *Notes from Ireland*, No. 1, vol. xxvi. p. 2.

for North Roscommon.¹ The discovery of the German plan to land arms followed; the Government decided to take vigorous measures; and on the 23rd twenty-eight Sinn Fein agitators, all of them implicated in the late rebellion, were arrested and deported by order of Sir Brian Mahon under the Defence of the Realm Regulations. The Nationalist party, feeling its influence in Ireland in peril of collapse, now took a further step in the direction of Sinn Fein, Mr. Dillon moving the adjournment of the House of Commons on the 26th as a protest against the deportation of men without trial. On 7 March Mr. T. P. O'Connor, member for the Scotland division of Liverpool, moved a resolution in favour of the immediate bestowal upon Ireland of 'the free institutions long promised her,' and in the course of the debate that followed Mr. Lloyd George, who had succeeded Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister on 5 December 1916, defined the principles on which the Government was prepared to act. The Government, he said, were willing to give Home Rule at once to any part of Ireland which desired it, but could not take any action to force Home Rule on the portion of Ireland to which it was repugnant. He suggested that the details of a settlement on this basis might be arranged either by a conference of Irishmen or by a commission, and ended by moving an amendment welcoming any settlement that did not involve the coercion of any part of Ireland. This was met by a violent protest by Mr. Redmond, in the name of the Nationalist party, who said that he would enter into no more negotiations, that the Government were playing into the hands of Sinn Fein, and that he and his followers would withdraw and consider apart what they would do. The Nationalists then left the House in a body. Next day they held a meeting, at which a statement was drawn up repudiating the right of a small minority in north-east Ulster to have a veto on self-government for a united Ireland, and appealing to men of Irish blood in the Dominions and the United States to bring pressure to bear upon the Government to act towards Ireland 'in accordance with the principles for which they were fighting in Europe.'

For more than two months no further open attempts

¹ The numbers were: Plunkett (S.F.), 1708; Tully (Nat.), 678.

at a settlement were made, and meanwhile in Ireland itself Sinn Fein gathered courage and force. On 23 February it had gained a footing in the Dublin Mansion House when Alderman O'Neill succeeded Sir William Galagher as Lord Mayor. On 6 March a Royal Irish constable was fired at and wounded in Ennistymon—a sinister portent in the light of later events. On the 21st Count Plunkett, who had received the freedom of the city of Sligo four days earlier, issued a circular calling for a Sinn Fein conference, and stating that the duty had been cast upon him of inaugurating a policy for Ireland. As the anniversary of Easter Week approached the tension increased. On 2 April the Dublin Corporation passed a resolution demanding an amnesty of the rebel prisoners, and on the 9th (Easter Monday) there were disturbances in Dublin, where the Sinn Fein flag was hoisted on the ruins of the Post Office, and in Cork, where, after high mass in the cathedral for the souls of the executed leaders, a noisy crowd of Sinn Fein demonstrators had to be dispersed by the police.

The most significant episode, however, was the meeting at the Dublin Mansion House, on 19 April, of the conference summoned by Count Plunkett. There were present between five and six hundred delegates from elective bodies throughout the country, and from Labour organisations, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Sinn Fein clubs, and the Women's League (*Cumann na mBan*), together with about a hundred representatives of the younger Roman Catholic clergy. In his address Count Plunkett declared that 'they would not be fettered slaves—and that any offer that England had to make that was short of complete liberty would be treated with contempt,' and he ended by proposing a long series of resolutions asserting the right of Ireland to complete independence and to representation at the Peace Conference, and pledging those present 'to use every means in their power' to attain the complete liberty of Ireland. After these resolutions had been carried unanimously, Mr. John Milroy moved, and Mr. Arthur Griffith seconded, a resolution in favour of united action between such bodies as Sinn Fein, the Nation League, the Irish-American Alliance, the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Labour

Party, and that, in order to secure control of public institutions and elective bodies, a Council, to be called the Executive Council of the Irish National Alliance, be created, with instructions to bring into being at the earliest possible moment a constituent assembly, to be known as the Council of the Irish Nation. This resolution, however, the chairman refused to put to the meeting, as too directly aimed against a still powerful section of Nationalist opinion, and substituted one couched in more general terms, namely, 'That we desire to establish an organisation to unite Irish advanced opinion, and provide for action as a result of its conclusion.' This was carried by acclamation.

Sinn Fein was thus provided with the nucleus of a national organisation. It was soon to be provided once more with the brains to make this organisation effective.

CHAPTER VI

THE IRISH CONVENTION

Fresh proposals for a settlement—Alternative proposals—Summoning of a Convention announced—Release of the Sinn Fein prisoners—Effect in Ireland—Sinn Fein appeals to President Wilson—Eamon de Valera—Attitude of the Roman Catholic clergy—De Valera's victory in East Clare—Reorganisation of the Volunteers—The Convention meets—Fundamental disagreements—Suggested compromises—Failure of the Convention—Proposed Constitution—Protest of 'Ulster'—Sinn Fein agitation during the Convention—Growing disorder—Sinn Fein victories at the polls—Hunger striking—Death of Thomas Ashe—Sinn Fein Convention in Dublin—De Valera proclaims his programme—Continued weakness of the Government—Activity of German agents.

ON 16 May 1917 the Prime Minister addressed to John Redmond a letter in which he made two alternative proposals for the settlement of the Irish question : (1) the immediate introduction of a Bill for the application of the Act of 1914, subject to an amendment providing for the exclusion for five years of the north-eastern counties of Ulster ; (2) the summoning of a Convention of Irishmen of all parties for the purpose of devising a scheme for Irish self-government. That the first of these proposals would find favour was improbable, in view of the unpopularity already incurred by the Nationalist party owing to their concessions to the principle of 'partition' ; and the improbability was increased by another Sinn Fein victory at the polls on 10 May, Mr. McGuinness, the Sinn Fein candidate, being returned by a majority of 37 over the official candidate of the Nationalist party.¹ Redmond, accordingly, rejected the first proposal, but accepted the second, which certainly gave a better prospect of some tangible result. On behalf of the Southern Unionists Lord Midleton also agreed, on condition that the Convention should be fully representative, and that its decisions should be subject to review by the Imperial

¹ The numbers were : McGuinness, 1498 ; M'Kenna, 1461.

Parliament. The representatives of Ulster in Parliament said that they would lay the Prime Minister's proposal before the Ulster Unionist Council.¹ Count Plunkett, on the other hand, without waiting for the Government scheme, announced on 18 May that Sinn Fein would take no part in it.

Undeterred by this attitude of Sinn Fein, the Government announced on 21 May that they would summon an Irish Convention empowered to submit to the Imperial Parliament a scheme for the future self-government of Ireland within the Empire. In making this announcement the Prime Minister said that if the Convention reached substantial agreement, the Government would give legislative effect to its decisions. It was not, he added, to be an assembly merely of politicians, but of representatives of all Irish interests and opinions, including Sinn Fein. The Government letter was to define the terms of reference, and the debates, in order to obviate undue pressure and intimidation from without, would be held with closed doors. On 11 June the Prime Minister announced the composition of the Convention. Invitations were to be sent to 101 representative Irishmen—chairmen of County and Borough Councils, with elected representatives from small towns and urban districts; four Roman Catholic bishops, the Protestant archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, and the moderator of the Presbyterian Church; the chairmen of the Dublin, Belfast, and Cork Chambers of Commerce; five representatives of Labour from the Trade Councils of Dublin and Cork and the Trade Unions of Belfast; five members each from the Nationalist Party, the Ulster Unionists, and the Southern Unionists, two from the O'Brienites,² and two Irish peers. Five seats were reserved for Sinn Fein; and the Government proposed to nominate the chairman and fifteen prominent Irishmen of all sections of opinion. Among those thus nominated were Dr. Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College, and Mr. George Russell ('A. E.'), whose 'Thoughts for the Convention,' published in the

¹ The Ulster Council consented on condition that no scheme would be forced on Ulster to which its representatives did not consent (8 June).

² Mr. William O'Brien, on 18 June, announced his refusal to attend the Convention, on the ground that nine-tenths of its members were 'pawnd beforehand to partitionist compromise.'

Irish Times, won the approval of that fiery Nationalist, Archbishop Walsh of Dublin. Finally, on 15 June, Mr. Bonar Law announced in the House of Commons that, 'in order that the Convention may meet in an atmosphere of harmony and good will,' the Government had decided to release all the prisoners convicted and sentenced for their share in the rebellion of 1916.

This release was unconditional. There was no such 'iron-clad' oath as the North had imposed upon the South after the American Civil War. The released Sinn Feiners were free to exercise all the rights of citizenship without first swearing allegiance to the United Kingdom; still less were they required to make a statement, before voting or taking office, that in sharing in the rebellion they had been guilty of 'treason and felony.' It was an act of political generosity without parallel in history. In Ireland it was very generally regarded as an act of political folly equally without parallel. The Lord Mayor of Dublin might, in addressing his Corporation, hail the release as 'a happy omen of peace and good will'; but by the mass of the Irish people it was looked upon as yet another victory for Sinn Fein, and the released leaders were quick to proclaim it as the outcome not of generosity, but of fear.¹ From the first they made their intentions perfectly clear; and their intentions were not peaceful. On the very day of their release (18 June) they joined in signing two appeals to the President and Congress of the United States, calling attention, in the name of 'the provisional Government of the Irish Republic,' to Mr. Wilson's statement, in his recent letter to the new Russian Government, that 'no people must be forced under a sovereignty under which it does not wish to live'; denouncing the 'English conspiracy against Ireland' and John Redmond's share in it, notably the 'hypocritical sham on the Statute Book' (the Act of 1914); representing the proposed Convention as but a device to find out the minimum that Ireland would accept; and ending by expressing their determination to be content with nothing short of the practical application in the case of Ireland of the principles which the President had

¹ De Valera in conversation with Mr. John Balderston, *McClure's* correspondent in Ireland.

enunciated—namely, that of the right of small nations to independence of foreign control. ‘We are engaged,’ the appeal of the ‘officers’ concluded, ‘and mean to engage ourselves in the practical means for establishing this right.’¹

They certainly lost no time in setting to work to organise these practical means. The arrival of a hundred released prisoners in Dublin was celebrated by a procession in which Sinn Fein flags were liberally displayed. The return of the liberated prisoners to Cork was the signal for a riot, in the course of which the gaol was wrecked and the military had to fire on the mob. Edward (Eamon) de Valera, who had been one of the leaders of the 1916 rebellion, at once became the most conspicuous figure in the movement. His facile eloquence gave him an easy ascendancy over a people easily swayed by oratory, and his zeal, almost amounting to fanaticism, appealed to a national temper which knows not the meaning of compromise. In vain the Roman Catholic hierarchy issued, on the 19th of June, an ‘instruction’ to priests warning them against ‘dangerous associations’ and ‘organisations that plot against the Church or lawfully constituted authority,’ and reminding them that it was strictly forbidden by the statutes of the National Synod ‘to speak of politics or kindred subjects in church.’² Among the younger priests national sentiment proved in the long run stronger than ecclesiastical discipline; and the Sinn Feiners knew well that, if they could carry the mass of the people with them, sooner or later the Church would also fall into line. And it seemed as though the mass of the people were willing to be carried. There were, indeed, spasmodic outbreaks against the revolutionists, as when, on 9 July, Countess Markievicz was attacked by a Nationalist mob at Ennis. But the true trend of public feeling was soon to be revealed by the election for the parliamentary representation of East Clare, vacant owing to the death of Major Willie Redmond at the front. Mr. de Valera had already been selected as the Sinn Fein candidate, and on 11 July he was returned

¹ *Documents relative to the Sinn Fein Movement*, p. 30 ff.

² The Instruction was signed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh and the Bishops of Cloyne and Ross (*Irish Times*, 20 June 1917).

by a majority of nearly 3000 votes over his Nationalist opponent.¹ According to the police reports this result was largely due to the fact that intimidation had been freely practised—a common factor in Irish elections; but the outcome was more obvious than the intimidation, and it gave an immense impetus to the Sinn Féin cause. Mr. de Valera was not slow to point the moral of his victory. In Clare itself he had said that if the Irish people combined they could make 'English law' impossible. Addressing a crowd in Dublin on the day following the election he explained the method of the combination. It must be under the Republican flag, and no other, and if Ulster stood in the way of Irish freedom, Ulster would have to be coerced.² This was said on 12 July, the day of the Boyne celebrations, the resumption of which showed that the men of Ulster had no intention of being coerced. Six days later an event of sinister import occurred—John Redmond's severance of his connection with the National Volunteers (18 July). Colonel Maurice Moore,³ their commander, now announced that a Convention would be held to nominate a governing body; and it was held, under his chairmanship, on 5 August, when it was decided to re-affirm allegiance to the original declaration of the Volunteers and to elect a committee to negotiate a reunion with the Irish Volunteers. Thus began the formidable organisation of the Irish Republican Army; and such was the 'atmosphere' in which, on 25 July, the Convention met to discuss and settle the future government of Ireland.

The meeting-place of the Convention was in the hall (known as the Regent House) over the entrance gate of Trinity College, which had been placed at its disposal by the Provost and Fellows. It was felt that the selection of Trinity as the scene of its labours was symbolical of the hoped-for fusion of the two conflicting streams of Irish political sentiment; for the old college founded by Queen Elizabeth, though traditionally loyal, had been a fruitful mother of Irish Nationalist leaders, among

¹ The figures were: De Valera, 5010; P. Lynch, 2035.

² *Irish Times*, 13 July 1917.

³ Brother of George Moore, the novelist. He had commanded a battalion of the Connaught Rangers.

its *alumni* being Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet. It was, however, of evil augury that the assembling of the members was greeted by no popular demonstrations. It was noted, too, that the delegates were nearly all elderly men; young Ireland stood contemptuously and ostentatiously aloof; and, indeed, among Irishmen generally there was little belief in any satisfactory outcome of the deliberations. Yet the earlier meetings gave the happiest promise. In Sir Francis Hopwood (afterwards Lord Southborough) the Convention had a secretary who brought to its aid his experience of the not very dissimilar problems presented by the negotiating of the Union of South Africa, and the general good will of the members was advertised by the unanimous election to the chair of Sir Horace Plunkett, who had proclaimed his conversion to Home Rule, but without attaching himself to any political party. A Grand Committee of twenty was elected to consider schemes presented under the terms of reference and to select those considered suitable for discussion. On 21 August the Convention met to consider these schemes, most of which suggested a form of government on the Dominion model, but with modifications to suit the peculiar conditions of Ireland. These debates lasted till 27 September, during which time the Convention visited and held several sessions in Belfast and Cork. On the latter date it was decided to refer the various schemes to the Grand Committee to report, and the Bishop of Raphoe, one of the representatives of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, was commissioned by the chairman to draft the heads of a scheme to serve as the basis of discussion in the committee.

The Grand Committee met on 11 October and, to facilitate business, decided to delegate the task of examining the draft scheme to a sub-committee of nine, other sub-committees being appointed to deal with the questions of electoral areas and representation, defence and police, and land purchase. The final report of the committee was presented on 21 November. It stated that it had arrived at certain provisional conclusions on most of the heads, but that these were all contingent on full agreement being reached on the general scheme. It was soon clear that no such general agreement was likely

to be reached. The first point of fundamental disagreement was as to the safeguards to be provided for permanent minorities. It had been agreed in the sub-committee that the Unionists,¹ north and south, should be guaranteed a 40 per cent. representation in the lower house of the parliament, this proportion to be made up, when necessary, by nomination. This proposal was submitted by the Ulster representatives to the advisory committee, outside the Convention, which had been set up to watch and guide their proceedings; and this decided that the proposal, though perhaps defensible in the case of the Southern Unionists, could not be accepted in the case of Ulster. Far more fateful, however, was the failure to reach an agreement on the fiscal powers to be given to the Irish Parliament. The Bishop of Raphoe's scheme contemplated that, pending federation of the United Kingdom, there should be no Irish representation in the Imperial Parliament; provided for the exercise by the Irish Parliament of complete control over finance, including customs and excise; and suggested the appointment of a commission to negotiate a trade, postal and customs union with Great Britain. These proposals represented a wide departure from the principles of the Act of 1914, and an approximation to the Sinn Féin ideal of an independent Ireland. They were opposed by the Unionists both of the south and north. The former were, indeed, prepared to concede to the Irish Parliament control of excise; but the Ulstermen insisted on full control of finance being left to the Imperial Parliament. Mr. Hugh T. Barrie, chairman of the Ulster representatives, pointed out in a letter to Sir Horace Plunkett² that the difference which had brought matters 'nearly to a dead-lock' rested on points of principle and not of detail. He urged that in matters of fiscal policy and economic life the interests of Ireland were inseparable from those

¹ In Ireland the words 'Unionist' and 'Protestant' are practically synonymous and are commonly used alternatively. 'Unionists,' as such, would of course cease to exist under Home Rule, and the 'safeguard' suggested would therefore have meant the stereotyping of parties on sectarian lines. The objection of Ulster, however, was that the nomination of parliamentary representatives is undemocratic and quite unsuitable to a democratic and industrial community such as N.E. Ulster.

² Nov. 14, 1917. *Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention* [Cd. 9019], p. 68 (Schedule VII).

of Great Britain and that there could be no differentiation of taxation or customs barrier between countries which must continue to be so intimately associated. The doctrine of fiscal autonomy was more than 'a symbol of political autonomy'—as Sir Horace had described it; it would, under a colonial form of government, separate the interests of Ireland from those of Great Britain and thus inevitably lead to the same goal as the Sinn Feiners desired to reach under a republic.¹ The practical independence of Ireland, under the Crown, would mean that, desiring to increase her industrial activities and with practically no raw materials within herself, she would be cut adrift from the strongest commercial power in the world and have to rely on her own resources in the welter of economic trouble with which the world would be faced at the end of the war. Ulstermen refused to be divorced from the great industrial people with whom they had so much in common.

On this rock the Convention split. The final report of the sub-committee, presented on 21 November, stated that on the all-important fiscal question it had been impossible to find a basis of agreement. The Grand Committee equally failed; and the question was introduced in the Convention itself, which debated it from the 18th December to the 24th January without coming nearer to a decision, a compromise suggested by Lord Midleton being rejected by a combination of Nationalists and Ulstermen. The Convention was now in danger of breaking up without effecting anything, and on 21 January the Prime Minister addressed a letter to Sir Horace Plunkett inviting a delegation from the Convention to go to London to discuss the crisis with the Cabinet, with a view to arriving at a solution. The invitation was accepted, but the resulting conferences were fruitless, and the problem was once more transferred to Dublin for the Convention to solve as best it might. The Prime Minister still hoped that substantial agreement might be

¹ Cf. with this § 18 of the 'Report of the undersigned Nationalists' attached to the Report of the Chairman of the Convention, p. 38: 'Federation is not in view. Even if it were, and Ireland were still intent on retaining control of her customs, her sea boundary and her distinct national character and economic interests would give her a claim in that respect which no member of a federation anywhere else can advance.'

reached ; on 21 February he addressed a letter of appeal to Mr. Barrie, the terms of which left no doubt of his anxiety to effect an immediate settlement and of his readiness to do all in his power to promote it ; and on the 25th he sent another letter, in almost identical language, to Sir Horace Plunkett.¹ No appeals and no arguments, however, could effect a compromise when interests and sentiment were in such diametrical opposition. On 12 March the Convention, despairing of reaching agreement, passed a compromise proposed by Lord Macdonnell to the effect that Customs and Excise should be under the control of the Imperial Parliament during the war, and thereafter until the question of such control had been considered and a decision arrived at by the Imperial Parliament, the decision to be taken not later than seven years after the conclusion of peace.² The motion was carried, but only by a majority of four in a house of 72 members, the minority including all the Ulster representatives and a number of Nationalists. Three days later (March 15) Mr. Barrie moved an amendment providing for the exclusion of Ulster from the jurisdiction of the Irish Parliament. This was defeated by 52 to 19, the Southern Unionists voting with the Nationalists against it. It marked, however, the definite withdrawal of the Ulster representatives from any appearance of compromise with the Nationalist principle, and the Statement of Conclusions reached by the Convention shows that they voted solidly against all proposals which involved recognition of the principle of setting up an Irish Parliament.³

The scheme, as ultimately accepted by a majority of the Convention on 5 April 1918, provided for the establishment of a parliament for the whole of Ireland, with an executive responsible to it. The parliament was to consist of the King, a Senate, and a House of Commons, but the supreme power and authority of the Imperial Parliament over all persons and causes in Ireland was reserved. The Irish Parliament was to have a general

¹ The letter to Sir H. Plunkett is printed in the Report, p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, Appendix X.

³ See Report, p. 24, and compare with the division lists, Appendix XVII.

power to make laws for Ireland, subject to certain reservations. Imperial matters—right of peace or war, army and navy, treaties and foreign relations, etc.—were specifically excluded from its competence. There were also to be certain restrictions imposed on its power in matters within its competence, mainly directed to safeguarding the liberties of the Protestant minority and the interests of existing Irish officers. To this end also the Convention accepted the principle that forty per cent. of the membership of the House of Commons should be guaranteed to the Unionists, the nominated members to disappear in whole or in part after fifteen years. Representation at Westminster was to continue, forty-two members being elected by panels formed in each of the four provinces by members of the Irish House of Commons in that province, and a fifth composed of members nominated by the House of Commons. All branches of taxation, other than Customs and Excise, were to be under the control of the Irish Parliament. The question of Customs and Excise was to be postponed in accordance with the terms of Lord Macdonnell's motion already quoted.

The various sections of the Report had been carried by majorities varying from 51 to 18, to 38 to 34, and the Report itself was adopted by a vote of 44 to 29, several prominent Nationalists, including the Bishop of Raphoe, voting with the Ulster representatives in the minority. It was clear that on no points had that substantial agreement been reached which would alone have justified the Government in attempting a dangerous constitutional experiment in the midst of the Great War.¹ In Ireland it was all but universally recognised that the Convention, for all the common love of country and mutual goodwill between Irishmen of different creeds and parties

¹ The Ulster Unionist delegates attached to the Chairman's Report a protest against its implication that a measure of agreement was attained regarding Irish self-government. They denied that their attitude had been merely obstructive, and ascribed the failure of the Convention to the refusal of the Nationalist members to agree to a *modus vivendi* which would at least provide for the absolute supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, maintain existing fiscal unity, guarantee protection for the Unionist minority, and ensure the safety of Irish industrial enterprises, 'the vast proportion of which are situated in the north-eastern counties of Ulster, and from which the bulk of the Irish revenue is derived' (p. 30).

which it had revealed, had been a failure. It belongs to the history of Ireland, but on the future development of that history it had, unhappily, no influence. It was outside the Convention that the fate of Ireland was being shaped.

The truth is that the 'atmosphere' provided for the Convention by the release of the Sinn Fein prisoners had been far from wholesome. The Sinn Fein organisation had never been broken up, but it had languished because its 'brains' were in prison. This sickness was now cured, and it at once displayed an astonishing vitality, Eamon De Valera, crowned with the double glory of his share in the rebellion and his victory in Clare, becoming its recognised leader. While the Convention was continuing its more or less amicable discussions in the academic calm of Trinity College, Sinn Fein orators were touring the country and inspiring increasing crowds of ignorant and excitable people with their own venom and their own views as to how Ireland was to find salvation. They took for their text, generally speaking, the words of Parnell, uttered in 1883: 'It is no use relying on the Government; it is no use relying on the Irish members. It is no use relying on the House of Commons. You must rely on your own determination, and if you are determined, I tell you you have the game in your hands.'¹ Their programme remained the same: to capture the parliamentary representation and the elected organs of local government, to boycott and supersede the royal courts and the officers of the law, to organise and arm a force capable of effective resistance to the forces of the Crown. The latter object was pursued with no attempt at disguise. On 28 July 1917 the Government issued a proclamation prohibiting the carrying of weapons, or of objects capable of being used as such, in public places. On the following day De Valera, after addressing an assembly of ten thousand people at Tullamore, reviewed a thousand Irish Volunteers; and on the same day a hundred men carrying hurleys² marched from Liberty Hall through

¹ Quoted by Darrell Figgis in *Nationality*, 4 Aug., 1917. He adds: 'That is Sinn Fein!'

² Practically a hockey club, but often weighted with lead or brass. The *Daily News*, among others, ridiculed the prohibition to carry these 'toys.' It was with a hurley that Inspector Mills was murdered in Dublin.

Dublin to Terenure. On 5 August, the anniversary of Casement's execution, a vast concourse of people assembled at Tralee in County Kerry, and went in procession to 'Casement's fort.' Sinn Fein tricolours were worn and waved, and it was noted that large numbers of Volunteers appeared in uniform.¹ From County Clare the police reported that De Valera's advice to the people to combine 'to make English law impossible' had produced a complete condition of lawlessness, the supporters of the Nationalist candidate at the recent election being boycotted together with the police; from Tipperary, that Sinn Fein had become violent and menacing, especially in Thurles, and that the movement was being worked up in concerts, dances, club meetings, Gaelic athletic tournaments, lectures and public meetings; from Cork, that serious disturbances had broken out, including a cowardly attack on female munition workers.² A similar agitation, with similar results, was taking place in many other parts of Ireland. Already there were reports of attacks on police barracks, and in many places the drilling of Volunteers was being resumed. At the same time the Sinn Fein clubs, and in some cases the County Councils (e.g. Kerry, 26 August), were calling upon their Nationalist members to resign. The result of all this was advertised by another victory of Sinn Fein at the polls, at Kilkenny (11 August), Mr. Cosgrave, who was destined to succeed Arthur Griffith as Free State President, beating Mr. Magennis, the Nationalist candidate, by 772 votes to 392.

It became absolutely necessary for the Government to take action, if any semblance of authority was to remain to it; on 14 August prominent Sinn Feiners were arrested in every province of Ireland; and this was followed by the seizure of arms belonging to the Irish and National Volunteers. The prisoners, many of whom had taken an active part in the German plot of 1916, were sentenced under the Defence of the Realm Act to various terms of penal servitude or imprisonment. But the greatest care was taken not to interfere with the free

¹ *Irish Times*, 7 Aug. 1917.

² *Confidential Intelligence Notes*, 1917. On 2 and 3 Sept. American sailors walking out with girls were mobbed and maltreated by the Sinn Fein 'Vigilance Committee.'

expression of opinion, so long as this did not amount to incitement to illegal acts; and when meetings were proclaimed, which was comparatively rarely, it was always because in the opinion of the police they would lead to grave disorder. Throughout the year, and during the earlier months of 1918, De Valera and his lieutenants continued their agitation practically unchecked. Their cause was helped by an untoward event which occurred on 25 September—the death of Thomas Ashe as the result of forcible feeding in prison. For some time past Sinn Fein prisoners had been imitating the suffragette device of the ‘hunger-strike,’ in order to secure their treatment as prisoners of war or political prisoners. Ashe, the hero of the Ashbourne affair already described, had been tried for murder and condemned to death by court martial after the Easter Week rebellion, but reprieved. Released by the general amnesty, he was re-arrested on 14 August, and on the 20th was condemned to one year’s hard labour for attempting to cause disaffection among the civil population. He went on hunger-strike, was forcibly fed by the prison doctor in the ordinary execution of his duty, and died of heart failure as a result of the process. The affair created an immense sensation, and Sinn Fein exploited it to the full. The funeral in Dublin of the latest martyr was attended by a vast concourse of people; the coffin was draped in the Sinn Fein tricolour and escorted by Irish Volunteers in uniform and armed; the Lord Mayor of Dublin (Alderman O’Neill) and Dr. Walsh, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, sent their coaches to swell the cortège, while the Dublin Corporation adjourned for a week as a sign of sympathy and respect.

For the Government, which during the inquest was loudly accused of deliberate murder, nothing could have been more unfortunate. On the 29th the authorities decided to modify the treatment of political prisoners; but the hunger-strikes continued; the Government, afraid of the effect of forcible feeding, and as yet unwilling to allow the prisoners to take the consequences of their self-imposed deprivation, had recourse to the provisions of the ‘Cat-and-Mouse Act,’ under which prisoners on hunger-strike could be released, but were subject to re-arrest when they had recovered their strength. The

result in Ireland was to make imprisonment little more than a cheap advertisement, prisoners being released after a few days' abstention from food. By November the situation had become so farcical that Mr. Justice Ross,¹ in the Land Judges' Court, declared that the government of Ireland had been abandoned. Yet even the feeble half-measures employed by the Chief Secretary, Mr. Duke, roused the opposition of the Nationalist members, who saw in obstructing the action of the Irish Executive the only surviving hope of retaining their weakening hold on the country. In reply to John Redmond, who on 23 October opened the attack on the Government in the House of Commons, Mr. Duke enlarged on the peril of the situation, pointing out that 200,000 young men were being enrolled in Ireland for the purpose of a new rebellion. Point was given to this by the news next day that the United States had frustrated an elaborate scheme for a new rising, with German aid, by the arrest of the Sinn Fein agent Liam Mellowes and Dr. Patrick MacCartan, Sinn Fein 'ambassador' in America.

The forbearance of the Government was illustrated by the assembling on 25 October, in the Dublin Mansion House, of a Convention summoned by Sinn Fein to formulate a constitution for Ireland. This Convention, which claimed to represent 12,000 Sinn Fein clubs with 250,000 members, concluded with a public session on the 27th, when the Sinn Fein constitution was announced. The object of the organisation was declared to be to secure the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Republic, and to 'make use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise.' De Valera was elected president, Arthur Griffith and Father Michael O'Flanagan, vice-presidents, Austin Stack and Darrell Figgis, secretaries. 'Departments,' under 'Ministers,' were to be created for military organisation, political organisation, education and propaganda, foreign relations, and finance. After the meeting a Convention of Irish Volunteers was held in a large store in Dublin. It was addressed by De Valera, who argued that by proper]

¹ Sir John Ross succeeded Sir James Campbell as the last Lord Chancellor of Ireland in July 1921.

organisation and recruiting Sinn Fein would secure 500,000 fighting volunteers, maintained that the only hope of another rebellion with any chance of success lay in a German invasion of England and the landing of further arms in Ireland, and urged the necessity of making preparations for this. 'There will never be peace in Ireland,' he said, 'till we get our independence. When the war is over England will be tottering. The Allies cannot win. All nations at the Peace Conference will claim their right to the freedom of the seas, and Ireland is of such international importance in that respect that her claim must be admitted. We want an army to back our claim. . . .'

On 4 November, at Athy, he delivered another speech, important as an index to Sinn Fein principles and methods. England, he urged, did not 'desire another front,' and therefore, if Ireland were armed, there would be no conscription. Turning to the attitude of the hierarchy, and possible action by the Vatican, he said that England would doubtless like such an intervention, but he claimed for priests in political matters full freedom, including that to join Sinn Fein.¹ As for the objects of Sinn Fein, the movement, he said, had two sides, the destructive side and the constructive side; the destructive side to destroy English misgovernment, and the constructive side to build up a self-respecting, self-reliant nation, a nation able to manage for itself, without looking abroad for help of any sort; and when the opportunity came for producing Ireland's case before the world, then to ask those nations who were supposed to be fighting for small nationalities if they were not hypocrites. It was on that plea, he believed, that England went into the war; so far as England was concerned that plea was hypocrisy. A bitter attack on John Redmond² followed, and a stout assertion that Sinn Fein was 'not afraid of Sir Edward Carson and his crew.'

It is not surprising that the repetition of this sort of

¹ On the 25th of November Cardinal Logue issued a pastoral condemning the agitation. Speaking at Roscommon, next day, De Valera refused to discuss this letter.

² These and similar attacks threatened to have unpleasant consequences, and while at Aughavanagh, in Wicklow, Mr. Redmond was protected by a police patrol.

language should, towards the end of the year, have produced a situation with which the Government, hampered by the 'atmospheric' theory of administration, was unable to cope. Disciplinary measures, even of a mild sort, had—according to the police reports—an instantaneously good effect; but discipline was all but impossible when the only available punishment, imprisonment, was rendered nugatory by the expedient of the hunger-strike and prisoners were released almost as soon as they were condemned.¹ The sword of justice, dropped from the nerveless hands of the legitimate administrators of the law, was grasped by Sinn Fein, which did not scruple to use 'any and every means' to attain its end. Thus, even so early as this, the effective control of affairs in large parts of Ireland was passing out of the hands of the officers of the Crown. The process may be illustrated by one instance. In December 1917, according to police reports from Clare, 'Sinn Fein continued to rule the county, and persons who were not Sinn Feiners must show sympathy with the movement if they wished to live in peace with their neighbours'—in other words, if they wished to escape the terrible weapon of the boycott, or worse.² That Sinn Fein was still in touch with Germany was proved when James Ruane, a local Sinn Fein leader, was arrested on 2 December at Kiltimagh in County Mayo, when he was found in possession of two pamphlets printed in Germany and bearing the official impress, 'Kriegs-Ausschuss der Deutschen Industrie, Berlin.'³

¹ Between 15 and 21 November 102 hunger-strikers were released from various prisons. From County Clare the police reported that 'the arrests for illegal drilling in November had a good effect until the release of the prisoners on hunger-strike, which made matters worse.' On the other hand they reported that in December the cessation of arrests had made many give up drilling, as they had done it out of mere bravado.

² As an indication of the spread of Sinn Fein it is interesting to note the great rise in the circulation of Sinn Fein organs. The *Irishman*, e.g., which in February 1916 had a circulation of only 1692, had increased this in November 1917 to nearly 15,000 weekly.

³ *Documents relative to the Sinn Fein Movement*, p. 39.

CHAPTER VII

' CONSCRIPTION '

Spread of disorder—Death of John Redmond—The Man Power Act extended to Ireland—John Dillon leads the Parliamentary Nationalists—Protests against 'Conscription'—Collaboration with Sinn Féin and Labour—The Roman Catholic hierarchy denounces Conscription—The Churches become political centres of resistance—Attitude of the Protestants—Religious cleavage accentuated—Effects of the differences in the Convention—Split in the Unionist Alliance—The 'Call to Unionists'—Secession of Lord Midleton and his friends—The Anti-Partition League formed—Viscount French of Ypres becomes Lord Lieutenant—Mr. Shortt Chief Secretary—Arrest of De Valera and other Sinn Féin leaders—Futile recruiting campaign—Growing anarchy in the country—Repressive measures—Violent language of Mr. Dillon—Decline in influence of the Nationalist party—Mr. Shortt reveals the existence of preparations for another rebellion—Joint declaration of the Coalition leaders in favour of Home Rule with the exclusion of Ulster.

THE beginning of 1918, which saw affairs in the Convention come to a crisis, saw also the development of grave disorders in large parts of the country. Through the south and west a flood of lawlessness was sweeping; in the counties of Clare, Sligo, Roscommon, and Mayo the King's writ had virtually ceased to run. From Clare, especially, the police reported that during the first four months of the year there was 'utter anarchy.' There were huge 'cattle-drives,' encouraged by the local clergy; illegal drilling was openly carried on; barracks of the Royal Irish Constabulary were attacked; on three occasions small patrols of police were overwhelmed and their arms taken; telegraph wires were cut and roads blocked to hamper the movements of the police and troops. 'It was not until a large force of soldiers were drafted in, and the county made a special military area¹ with very severe restrictions, that some sort of order was restored.' Similar reports, though not so grave, came from other counties; in Galway and in Tipperary, as in

¹ 30 March.

Clare, there were numerous raids for arms on isolated country houses, carried out by bands of masked men ; and Tipperary, where the police reported a ‘ reign of terror,’ had to be declared a special military area so early as 6 March. On the same day there were serious riots in Limerick.

Such was the lamentable state of things when, on 6 March, John Redmond died in London, and with him the last hope of settling the Irish Question on a basis of reasonable compromise. In him, indeed, it is said that the hope had died already, and that his death was hastened by the consciousness of the breakdown of his life’s work. He had met the fate of revolutionary leaders everywhere and in Ireland more particularly : the movement he had begun by leading had later on pressed him forward against his better judgment, and in the end had overwhelmed him and left him bleeding in its wake. His loyal attitude during the war, and his dignified bearing in the Convention, had earned him the respect of his Unionist opponents.¹ But for these very reasons Young Ireland pursued him with implacable hatred even beyond the grave. Masses had been sung, and were yet to be sung, for the souls of those who waded towards their various goals through the blood of their fellow-countrymen. The Bishop of Limerick refused to allow a requiem to be sung in his cathedral church for the soul of John Redmond, on the ground that it would introduce politics into his church.

Young Ireland, indeed, had never forgiven Redmond his recruiting campaign, and the terror of conscription was still the inspiration of its attitude. On 11 January 1918 the Ulster Unionist Council had urged the Government

¹ ‘ When Mr. Redmond agreed to meet Unionists in Convention, I am convinced that he had the honest and genuine intention of holding out the olive branch, and submitting such moderate demands as might have justified the Ulster delegates consulting their constituents regarding them. His general attitude in the Convention was unmistakably moderate and dignified. . . . I am bound also to bear witness to the fact that a number of Mr. Redmond’s followers in the Convention gave evidence of his own admirable spirit, but the current was too strong to be resisted and, like their leader, they were carried along on its tide ’ (*Belfast Chamber of Commerce*, Address of the President (Mr. H. M. Pollock) on the Irish Convention, 21 May 1919). Speaking in the House of Lords on 22 July 1923, the Earl of Midleton said that John Redmond had expressed to him his readiness, in the event of an agreement being reached, to serve under Sir Edward Carson as Prime Minister of Ireland.

to extend the Military Service Act to Ireland; but three days later, when the new Bill was introduced into the House of Commons, Sir Auckland Geddes announced that this would not be done. It was a victory for the Irish Parliamentary party, and its reflex was seen in the results of the by-elections in Ireland, Nationalist candidates defeating Sinn Feiners in South Armagh (2 February), at Waterford (23 March), and in East Tyrone (4 April).¹ The day following this latter election saw the last meeting of the Irish Convention; and the setback to Sinn Fein seemed of favourable augury for some satisfactory outcome of its labours. But circumstances almost at once arose which again made any peaceful solution of the Irish question impossible.

The March offensive of the Germans, resulting in the pressing back of the British line with an immense loss of men and material, made it necessary for the Government to summon every possibly available man in Great Britain to the colours, the age limit being raised to fifty. It was felt, however, that to call elderly men to arms in Britain while thousands of young men of military age in Ireland continued to be exempt would strain the patience of the British to breaking point; and when, on 9 April, Mr. Lloyd George introduced the Man Power Bill, he announced that it contained a provision extending obligatory military service to Ireland on the same terms as to England. On the following day the second reading of the Bill passed by 323 votes to 100, the clause extending it to Ireland being carried two days later by a slightly smaller majority.

The passing of this measure, which two years earlier would probably have been accepted in Ireland without serious demur, at once threw the whole country into fresh turmoil, which Mr. Lloyd George's undertaking to introduce a Bill to give self-government to Ireland did nothing to allay. The election on the 12th of March of Mr. John Dillon as John Redmond's successor had given the Nationalist party a leader whose characteristic

¹ The figures were: S. Armagh—Donnelly (Nat.), 2324; Dr. MacCartan (the Sinn Fein 'ambassador' to the U.S.A.), 1305; Richardson (Ind. Unionist), 40. Waterford—Captain W. A. Redmond (Nat.), 1242; Dr. White (S.F.), 764. E. Tyrone—Harbison (Nat.), 1802; Sean Milroy (S.F.), 1222.

attitudes were neither dignified nor moderate, and whose whole temperament would have tended to drive him into extremes even had there been no necessity to compete with Sinn Fein for popular favour. Under his auspices, indeed, Nationalists and Sinn Feiners established a sort of temporary alliance, ominous of the ultimate fate of the parliamentary party. The first step in this direction was taken on the 17th of April, when, after the defeat of an amendment to exclude Ireland from the Man Power Bill, the Nationalists left the House of Commons in a body and decided to transfer their deliberations to Dublin. On the 18th, the day on which the Bill received the royal assent, a meeting to denounce it was held at the Mansion House, Dublin, and was attended by the leaders of the Nationalists, of Sinn Fein and of the various Labour groups; it was noted that Mr. Dillon referred to Mr. De Valera and Mr. Tom Johnson, the Labour leader,¹ as his ‘colleagues.’ On the following day they issued a joint statement protesting against the claim of the Imperial Parliament to impose ‘conscription’ on Ireland, and commissioned the Lord Mayor of Dublin (Alderman O’Neill) to proceed to the United States in order to lay it before President Wilson.² On the 20th Mr. Dillon presided over a meeting of the Nationalist party in Dublin, at which it was decided to cease attendance at Westminster and to remain in Ireland for the purpose of defeating conscription. On the 23rd the Transport Workers’ Union carried out a one day’s strike in all parts of Ireland, except the north-east counties of Ulster, as a protest against conscription. But by far the most serious effect was produced by the action of the Roman hierarchy. Hitherto, while not disguising their sympathy with the cause of Irish nationalism and helping it by every legitimate means, they had carefully avoided lending their moral support to any resistance to lawful authority, while the

¹ An Englishman, formerly a commercial traveller, and now Secretary to the Transport Workers’ Union.

² It was believed that the Government would create another occasion for outcry by refusing to give the Lord Mayor a passport. The Government, however, consented to issue passports, but made it a condition that the document to be presented to the President should be first shown to the Lord-Lieutenant. To this the Irish leaders refused to agree, and it was made the excuse for abandoning the whole enterprise. The Cork Corporation had also protested, and appealed to President Wilson (12 April).

use of the churches for political purposes had been expressly forbidden. This attitude was now changed. On the 18th of April, the day on which the first anti-conscription meeting was held at the Mansion House in Dublin, the bishops met at Maynooth, under the presidency of Cardinal Logue, and decided to throw the whole weight of the Church against the Act, which was described as 'an oppressive and inhuman law, which the Irish people have a right to resist by all the means that are consonant with the law of God.' They proceeded to draw up a form of pledge to resist conscription, directing it to be administered by the priests after Mass to all the faithful,¹ and every Roman Catholic 'chapel' in Ireland was thus soon turned into an active centre of political resistance. It was the first step in the process of compromising with the spirit of lawlessness and violence which was destined to sap the moral and spiritual authority of the Church in Ireland and leave its pastors lamenting their powerlessness to control the forces by which the country had been 'wrecked from end to end' or to save 'the young lives utterly spoiled by early association with cruelty, robbery, falsehood and crime.'²

In vain loyal Catholics protested against this action of their bishops. Protestants, on the other hand, were not reassured by the arguments with which the learned Father Peter Finlay, S.J., sought to justify it. 'No doubt,' he wrote, 'political consequences of the first magnitude have followed on the action of the bishops; but the issue laid before them was religious and moral, not political. . . . Laws of Parliament may be just or unjust, binding or not binding upon conscience; and when we Catholics doubt their justice and binding force, we appeal, not to politicians or civil courts for guidance, but to the Catholic bishops. In this sense we set our bishops above parliament and the laws of parliament, as every true Christian sets his individual conscience.'³ This justification of

¹ The pledge ran thus: 'Denying the right of the British Government to enforce compulsory service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal.'

² Joint Pastoral issued from Maynooth on 10 October 1922.

³ Letter published in the *Irish Times*, 14 May 1918, afterwards amplified in an article in the Jesuit and Sinn Féin quarterly review, *Studies*, vol. vii. No. 26, June 1918.

the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy was, from the point of view of Irish Protestants, more disconcerting than the attitude itself. The Irish are individually easy-going and tolerant; but collectively they are aggressive and intolerant; and Protestants well knew that the fact that they lived on the most friendly terms with their Catholic neighbours was in itself no guarantee that their rights and their property would be respected were the Catholics ever to get the upper hand. They had seen, from the recent cases of the *Motu Proprio Quantavis diligentia*¹ and the *Ne temere*² decree, how completely the Roman Church adhered to the most extreme claims to jurisdiction put forward by the mediaeval popes. They knew that the principle of toleration had been condemned by three popes during the nineteenth century,³ and they naturally asked themselves what use parliamentary safeguards for their religious liberties would be under Home Rule, if the laws of the Irish Parliament were to be subject to the ‘moral’ censorship of the Roman Catholic hierarchy with an ultimate appeal to Rome. The whole ‘conscription’ controversy, indeed, still further increased the unhappy national cleavage represented by religion; for while the Roman Catholic clergy were organising their forces to resist, the Protestant archbishops of Armagh and Dublin sent out an ‘urgent appeal’ to the young men of the Church of Ireland to join the colours, expressing the hope that compulsory service would be ‘cheerfully accepted,’ while the Moderator and General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church issued a similar appeal.

Unfortunately for the Protestants, at this crisis in their fate, their own ranks were broken by an angry controversy as to the attitude in the Convention of the

¹ This reasserted the ancient *privilegium fori*, forbidding under penalty of excommunication the summoning without authority of any ecclesiastical person before a lay tribunal. It was issued in 1911. Archbishop Walsh of Dublin issued a pamphlet pointing out, *inter alia*, that Ireland was one of many countries to which it did not apply.

² Issued on 2 August 1907. It laid down that a dispensation for marriage with a heretic is only to be granted on condition that the parties are married by a Catholic bishop, or by a priest accredited by him, that no religious ceremony shall take place except in a Catholic church, and that all the children shall be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith.

³ By Gregory XVI in the encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832), Pius IX in the Syllabus of 1864, and Leo XIII in the encyclical *De libertate humana* of 1888.

five delegates appointed by the General Council of the Irish Unionist Alliance. These delegates, under the leadership of Lord Midleton, had interpreted their mandate as meaning that, in the interests of the Empire, they were to arrive at some compromise with the Nationalists in the matter of Home Rule; and, while affirming their own unshaken belief in the system of the Union, they had accepted the principle of Irish self-government and voted on many occasions with the Nationalists against the Ulster Unionist delegates. On 1 January 1918 Lord Midleton made his first report to the Executive Committee of the Alliance, and this was approved by forty-one votes to four. It was soon found, however, that the Executive Committee, which had not been renewed since the beginning of the war, did not in this matter represent the opinions of the great majority in the Alliance. A Southern Unionist Committee was at once formed under the chairmanship of Mr. Richard Bagwell, the eminent historian of Ireland, and on 4 March issued a 'Call to Unionists':

The circumstances of the present time demand that all true Unionists, especially outside Ulster, should reiterate, with no uncertain voice, their conviction that in the maintenance of the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland, and in the firm, just, and impartial administration of the law, lies the only hope for the future of our country and the security of His Majesty's dominions.

It pointed out that the present revolutionary movement, which was 'gaining strength day by day,' aimed—like all preceding ones—at complete separation; it urged that the true policy to be pursued towards Ireland was, in combination with firm and just government, the development of her material resources and the removal of agrarian discontent by the completion of land purchase; and it ended by stating that 'the burdens and obligations of the war, already imposed on the rest of the United Kingdom, should be shared by Ireland.'

This manifesto led to a heated controversy in the press. It had, however, no effect on Lord Midleton and his followers in the Convention, who voted in the majority for the Report. The Southern Unionist Committee at once issued a criticism of the Report, pointing out that

the delegates of the Alliance had publicly declared for Home Rule in its most drastic form, and calling on Unionists to 'stand firm.' That this attitude represented the view dominant in the Alliance was proved when, at a meeting of the General Council held on the 7th of June, sixteen out of twenty members elected to fill vacancies on the Executive Committee were nominees of the Southern Unionist Committee. Lord Midleton's supporters were, however, still in a majority on the Executive Committee, and at a meeting held on the 1st of October he was re-elected chairman. But though this meeting once more unanimously placed on record 'its unalterable opposition to the granting of Home Rule to the whole or any portion of Ireland,' the attitude of the chairman and his followers towards Ulster, and their evident readiness to accept Home Rule rather than 'partition,' made them suspect to the rank and file, and it was decided that an amendment of the constitution of the Alliance was necessary, in order to make the Executive Committee representative of the views of the General Council. This was done at a special meeting summoned by the Southern Unionist Committee on 24 January 1919. Lord Midleton proposed at this meeting to exclude the northern members from its deliberations, should the question of partition arise. This motion was lost by an overwhelming majority; the amendments to the constitution were carried by 400 votes to 62; and at the subsequent elections to the Executive Committee the forty nominees of the Southern Unionist Committee were elected by large majorities. Lord Midleton and his friends, taking this as a vote of censure, thereupon left the Alliance and formed the separate group subsequently known as the 'Anti-Partition League.' The Unionist Alliance was thus re-established on the basis of uncompromising adherence to the Union, with branches in every county in Ireland, including Ulster. It continued to work in close touch with the Ulster Unionist Council, which represented the exclusive interests of Unionists in the six counties. From the Unionist point of view, however, the schism was disastrous; for the seceding members of the Alliance, though few in numbers, included many Irish peers of great influence in the House of Lords,

and their defection greatly crippled the resources of the Alliance, which was left practically without representation in Parliament.

Meanwhile excitement among the people had been growing apace, and there were signs and wonders to keep it alive. Miracles are always of almost every day occurrence in Ireland, where the mass of the peasants, carefully preserved by their Church from the slightest contamination of 'Liberalism,' live in an atmosphere of the supernatural and, like the grown-up children they are, use their naturally quick intelligence to people the waste spaces of their world with a host of creatures of the imagination. The spring of 1918, however, was particularly rich in portents. In Connacht a new-born baby prophesied woes to Ireland, and died within an hour.¹ At Aughrim in Galway the Blessed Virgin appeared, while at Kiltrustan in Roscommon there was a vision of a black pig, with a phantom litter of 'bonhams,'—a certain presage of trouble. The latter portent had been visible only to three little girls, but hundreds of people, including many priests, visited the spot where it was seen.² Clearly the arguments of the Sinn Fein patriots were being reinforced by voices from heaven. The Roman Catholic churches all over Ireland were crowded with people signing the anti-conscription pledge, and to refuse to do so called for more than ordinary courage.

If the Crown was to preserve any shadow of authority in the country, it was now plain that there must be a change in the system of the administration. The change was heralded on the 1st of May 1918 by the retirement of Mr. Duke, who was rewarded with the more congenial post of a Lord Justice of Appeal, and the appointment of Mr. Edward Shortt, K.C., as Chief Secretary. On the 6th it was announced that the lord-lieutenancy, in succession to Lord Wimborne, had been accepted by Viscount French of Ypres, and on the 11th the new Viceroy and Chief Secretary arrived in Dublin. Sir Brian Mahon had resigned the Irish command two days earlier. On the 5th of June Sir James Campbell became Lord Chancellor in succession to the Nationalist Sir Ignatius O'Brien, who was raised to the peerage as Lord

¹ Compare Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, lib. ii. cap. i.

² *Irish Times*, 27 April 1918.

Shandon. The spirit of the new order was symbolised by the changes at the Viceregal Lodge, where Lord Wimborne had kept up the traditions of viceregal splendour. For this was now substituted the simple discipline of a military household.

The new administration was not slow in getting to work. Six days after the arrival of the new Chief Secretary, De Valera was arrested. Among the compromising documents found upon him was an elaborate scheme, evidently worked out by an expert, for the military organisation of independent Ireland on the basis of compulsory service, together with plans for the creation of a navy and the fortification of the coasts against possible attacks from Great Britain.¹ On the following day the Government issued a proclamation announcing the discovery of a dangerous German intrigue,² and on the 20th a large number of prominent Sinn Féiners were arrested, including Arthur Griffith, John Milroy, Count Plunkett, Countess Markievicz, and Herbert Mellowes. These were all deported to England, and further deportations followed on the 22nd and 24th. On the 21st, at a meeting of the Anti-Conscription Committee at the Dublin Mansion House, Messrs. Dillon, Tim Healy, William O’Brien, Joseph Devlin, and Tom Johnson combined in denouncing the deportations as ‘ a wicked plot of English politicians,’ and on 3 June the Dublin Corporation followed their example. On 25 May the Council of the National University advertised its views by re-appointing Mr. John MacNeill to the professorial chair which he had forfeited owing to his share in the rebellion.

Meanwhile, no attempt had been made to put the Military Service Act in force in Ireland, and on the 3rd of June the Lord-Lieutenant issued a proclamation calling for voluntary recruits, announcing that in the event of a satisfactory response the Act would not be applied, and promising grants of land to men who had served in the war. An active recruiting campaign was at once begun under the direction of a committee consisting largely of Irish Nationalists who had fought at the front, while another committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Horace Plunkett, was presently set up in Dublin and

¹ See *Documents* [Cmd. 1108], Appendix A (1), pp. 47 ff.

² *Ibid.* pp. 41 ff.

supplied with large funds for the purpose of countering the Sinn Fein anti-war propaganda. It was, however, now too late for any such efforts to have any hope of success. Earlier recruiting campaigns had been marked by complete failure to understand the Irish character and point of view; but the new appeal, which represented a serious effort to approach the matter from the Irish standpoint, had even less success. The recruiting meetings, conducted with great courage—and sometimes with somewhat double-edged eloquence—by Nationalists who held His Majesty's commission, were exposed to organised interruption by the Sinn Feiners, and this sometimes grew into violence, necessitating the intervention of the police. Public opinion, as reflected in local administrative bodies, seemed at first divided; on the 31st of July, for instance, the Galway County Council refused to hear Captain Stephen Gwynne and Mr. Serjeant Sullivan, K.C., on behalf of the Recruiting Council, while on the following day the Galway Urban Council gave them a sympathetic hearing. The Sinn Fein opposition, however, backed as it was by sheer terrorism, soon produced its effect and, except in the north-eastern counties of Ulster, local bodies for the most part refused their sympathy and support to the recruiting movement. By the 12th of November, when recruiting was stopped after the Armistice, of some 150,000 men of military age only 11,301 had joined the colours. The only practical outcome of the campaign, conducted as it was by Nationalists with a loud appeal to President Wilson's programme, was to commit the Government irrevocably in the eyes of the Irish people to the principle of 'self-determination.'¹

Meanwhile evidence of the revolutionary activities of Sinn Fein continued to reach the Government, and on 24 June 40,000 rounds of ammunition, concealed in corn sacks from the north, were seized in Dublin. The arrest of a German agent named Dowling (*alias* O'Brien) in April, and his trial in London in July, pointed the moral of these military preparations; and on 3 July

¹ The speeches in which President Wilson had enlarged on the theme that 'all Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed' were actually distributed broadcast in Ireland at the expense of the British Government.

the Sinn Fein organisation, Sinn Fein clubs, the Irish Volunteers, the Cumann na mBan (Women’s Association), and the Gaelic League were proclaimed as dangerous associations under the Defence of the Realm Act. Next day the whole western sea-board of Ireland was declared a military area under the same Act. The state of the country, indeed, warranted drastic action. From all parts of the south and west came reports of raids for arms by masked men on isolated country houses, and all the evidences of the beginnings of an organised terror. In Wexford, in Wicklow, in Longford, in King’s County, as well as in such perennially lawless counties as Clare and Tipperary, the charges of the judges to the grand juries, at the summer assizes, referred to a dangerous state of things ‘which could not go on in any civilised country’—outrages, intimidation, boycotting. The grand jury of County Clare handed in a resolution approving of the steps taken by the Government ‘to restore the rudimentary elements of law and order,’ and stating their opinion that ‘the retention of a competent military authority, together with sufficient forces, to be absolutely necessary to the continued maintenance of the peace of the county.’ Such, however, was not the opinion of John Dillon and the Nationalist members who, after an absence of three months, had returned to Parliament on 23 July. On the 29th Mr. Dillon moved that the Irish policy of the Government was inconsistent with the principles for which the Allies were fighting, and in the course of a violent speech spoke of Ireland as ‘under the unfettered tyranny of military government,’ and suggested that President Wilson should be called in to settle the question. In his reply Mr. Shortt, the Chief Secretary, threw the blame for the condition of Ireland on the Nationalists, who were trying to outbid the Sinn Feiners in violence instead of restraining them.

This was truer than his sanguine assertion that things in Ireland had improved. The Nationalists, by their official collaboration with Sinn Fein in the anti-Conscription Council, had delivered themselves into the hands of the extremists, and they were becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that, in a competition which was less one of principle than of political influence, they were playing a losing game. It had early become

apparent that the union of all the Nationalist elements on the common ground of opposition to conscription had been more apparent than real, and that its most obvious outcome was a formidable accession of prestige and power to Sinn Féin. It had persuaded Mr. Dillon to accept, at least for the time, its policy of abstaining from attendance at Westminster; it had secured for a Sinn Féin organisation the control of the anti-conscription funds raised by the Mansion House Committee; and it had made not the slightest concession in return. The full import of this was revealed during the contest which preceded the election for East Cavan on 21 June, and its result. Over the question of a candidate the Nationalist party and Sinn Féin were 'at one another's throats.' It was suggested that this seat, which had been held by a Nationalist, should be left to a Sinn Féiner for the sake of preserving 'national unity.' But on 3 May Mr. Dillon had declared that 'if the spirit exhibited by the leaders of Sinn Féin in making an attempt to capture the seat were to prevail, national unity would be obviously impossible.'¹ The attempt did prevail, J. F. O'Hanlon, the candidate of the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, being soundly beaten by Arthur Griffith.² It was the writing on the wall.

In the autumn, shortly before the Armistice and the dissolution of Parliament which followed, Mr. Dillon made another desperate effort to retrieve the falling fortunes of his party. On 4 November Mr. T. P. O'Connor moved in the House of Commons that the Irish question should be taken up at the Peace Conference and settled in accordance with President Wilson's principle of 'self-determination.' This humiliating proposal, though it had the support of Mr. Asquith, was naturally rejected. In the course of his speech in opposition to the motion Mr. Shortt challenged the Nationalists to say what settlement they wanted, and drew from Mr. Dillon the admission that he contemplated the coercion of Ulster. The Chief Secretary also took occasion to draw attention to conditions in Ireland, which he painted in gloomy colours

¹ At Bailieborough, E. Cavan. *Irish Times*, 3 May.

² The numbers were: Griffith (S.F.), 3785; O'Hanlon (Nat.), 2581.

contrasting oddly with his optimistic picture of July. All the materials for an armed rising were prepared, he said, and only the week before the forces of the Crown had captured at the headquarters of the Irish Republican Brotherhood enough explosives to blow up all Dublin and Belfast. On 28 November, immediately after the dissolution of Parliament, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law, on behalf of the Coalition Liberals and the Coalition Unionists respectively, issued a joint manifesto on the Irish question :

Ireland is unhappily rent by contending forces, and the main body of Irish opinion has seldom been more inflamed or less disposed to compromise than at the present moment. So long as the Irish question remains unsettled, there can be no political peace either in the United Kingdom or in the Empire, and we regard it as a first object in British statesmanship to explore all practical paths towards the settlement of this grave and difficult question, on the basis of self-government. But there are two paths which are closed—the one leading to a complete severance of Ireland from the British Empire, and the other the forcible submission of the six counties of Ulster to a Home Rule parliament against their will.

Thus the Unionist party, after thirty years’ resistance, surrendered through the mouth of their leader the whole basis of principle on which they had stood. The effect both in England and Ireland was disastrous. In Ireland it strained the ties of sentiment connecting the Unionists of the South with Great Britain almost to breaking point, without doing anything to reconcile the Nationalists to what remained of the Union. In England it was the beginning of the moral rot in the Unionist ranks which was to end in the disgraceful capitulation of 1921. For it is one thing to fight for a principle, and quite another to be expected to fight for the prospectus of a company of explorers very much at sea. Moreover, the principle of Unionism having been thus abandoned, and the unit for the purposes of self-determination being admittedly no longer the United Kingdom, the Sinn Fein position was soon enormously strengthened *de jure* by the result of the elections of December 1918, which showed that at least those Irishmen who had the courage to vote were overwhelmingly in favour of the Republic.

CHAPTER VIII

DAIL EIREANN

The General Election—Sinn Fein triumphant—Analysis of the returns—Dail Eireann—De Valera elected President—Policy and powers of the Government—Outrage and repression—Shipyard strike in Belfast—New party groups—America and Ireland—President Wilson and self-determination—American delegation to Dail Eireann—Sinn Fein and the Peace Conference—Refusal of President Wilson to intervene—De Valera goes to America—Sinn Fein agitation in the United States—Amazing action of the United States Congress—Resolutions supporting Sinn Fein in the Senate and House of Representatives—The fifteenth Reservation to the Covenant of the League of Nations—Protests by the American Legion and others—Reaction on Ireland.

THE general election under the new franchise, which practically amounted to universal suffrage, was held on 14 December 1918. Save in Ulster and in one or two constituencies in Dublin, the struggle was wholly between the Nationalist party and Sinn Fein,¹ and in this contest Sinn Fein was bound to win. The Nationalist party was hopelessly disorganised, and its funds were all but exhausted. The Sinn Fein leaders, on the other hand, had had plenty of time to perfect their organisation after their release in 1917, and the easy conditions of their internment had made it possible to direct it even after their re-arrest. Irish-America, too, having taken up their cause, supplied them with plentiful funds. All the conditions, therefore, favoured them. Owing to the state of the country, no police were available for maintaining order. Personation was rife—the dead voted in large numbers, while known opponents of Sinn Fein were warned not to vote if they did not wish to be dead; and, since the polling clerks were almost exclusively Sinn Fein, the electors believed, rightly or wrongly, that

¹ At the suggestion of Cardinal Logue, who pointed out the danger of losing seats to 'the enemy,' the Sinn Feiners and Nationalists agreed not to stand against each other in certain Ulster constituencies, the Cardinal acting as arbitrator in the apportionment of the seats.

their voting papers would be examined and they themselves marked. The result was that there was a vast number of abstentions.¹ All this, in addition to the undoubted swing round of opinion in the direction of Sinn Fein, secured for the Republicans a sweeping victory. John Dillon himself was rejected, and the Nationalist party, which had crumbled under his leadership, was all but wiped out, retaining only six seats out of sixty-eight; the Independent Nationalists (O'Brienites) vanished altogether; Sinn Fein captured seventy-three out of a total of 105 seats.² The Unionists improved their position. Before the election they had returned eighteen members; they now returned twenty-six, and the 400,000 Protestants of the South were actually represented in the new Parliament by three members—two for Trinity College and one for South Dublin. Yet, whatever doubts might be felt as to the results of the elections being a true index to the considered opinion of the country, the fact remained that the great majority of the Irish representatives were now committed to the policy of revolution. *

The victorious group assumed the title of the Irish Republican Party, and its elected representatives styled themselves, not M.P., but F.D.E. (*Feisire Dail Eireann*, i.e. members of the Assembly of Ireland, changed later to T.D., *Taochtaí Dail*). On the 8th of January 1918 they held their first meeting in the Dublin Mansion House, under the presidency of Count Plunkett, and on the 21st the first formal meeting of the Dail was held in the same place. The proceedings were opened with prayer by Father O'Flanagan. Charles Burgess (Cathal Brugha)³ was then elected Speaker, and a solemn Declaration of

¹ 'The only totals that can be estimated are those of the seats where a contest took place, and where Sinn Fein was admittedly polled to the last man. Yet in those seats, with a total electorate of over 1,452,000 voters, Sinn Fein polled only 480,000 votes—less than one-third' (*The Times*, 17 Jan. 1919).

² Mr. Joseph Devlin held his seat in East Belfast, and Major Willie Redmond his father's constituency in Waterford. Both these continued to attend the Parliament at Westminster.

³ Burgess, who is said to have been by birth a Yorkshireman, became later one of the most redoubtable gunmen and instruments of the Sinn Fein terror. He remained an uncompromising Republican, refused to accept the 'Treaty' in 1921, and was killed at the close of the fighting in Sackville Street, Dublin, between the Free State troops and the Irregulars in August 1922.

Independence was read in English, Gaelic and French, the twenty-nine members present rising and subscribing to it in a body. The proceedings closed with the nomination of Count Plunkett, Arthur Griffith, and Eamon De Valera as 'delegates to the Peace Conference.' This meeting was public. On the following day a private session was held at which Mr. De Valera was elected 'President of the Irish Republic,' and a ministry was established, with departments for finance, home affairs, foreign affairs, and defence. Among the 'ministers' was the redoubtable Michael Collins,¹ who as head of the 'War Office' was later to take a share in organising the reign of terror, to earn a legendary fame for his prowess as a gunman and his hair-breadth escapes, and to be hailed by Mr. Lloyd George as 'the bravest representative of a valiant race.'

That an opposition Parliament should have been allowed to debate openly, and to set up an opposition Government, in a country under 'martial law' may well surprise those who judge events in Ireland by the universal experience of other countries, and the spectacle of the metropolitan police guarding the peace of a rebel assembly would have yet more surprised them. In order to account for this singular phenomenon, and much else that happened during the time of troubles to come, it is necessary to explain the powers possessed by the Irish Government and the principles on which these powers were exercised. Ireland had not been put under martial law in the sense in which the South was after the Civil War in the United States.² The Defence of the Realm Act, which gave large powers to the Government to deal more or less summarily with persons dangerous to the State, was a temporary war measure common to the whole United Kingdom, and its operation was very jealously safeguarded. In addition to this, however, the Government had a reserve weapon in the Criminal Law and Procedure (Ireland) Act of 1887, but nearly all the clauses of this Act required a

¹ He had been a junior clerk in the Post Office in London, and had come to Ireland to avoid conscription.

² When on May 1, in the debate on the Budget, Mr. Joseph Devlin denied the moral right of the Government to tax Ireland, on the ground that martial law had been substituted for the Constitution, he was merely indulging in the usual wild exaggeration.

proclamation of the Lord-Lieutenant in Council before they came into force. The principle followed was to use these powers only in cases of grave necessity, so as to interfere as little as possible with the ordinary life of the country, and to apply them only temporarily and to given disturbed areas. Meetings were only interfered with when, in the opinion of the police, they were likely to lead to grave breaches of the peace, and the ban at times fell on Orange demonstrations as well as on those of Sinn Fein. Thus the brutal murder on 21 January 1919 of Constable MacDonnell—the first indication of a campaign which was to reach terrible proportions—was followed on the 28th by the proclamation under the Defence of the Realm Act of South Tipperary as a ‘military area’; the murder of Mr. J. C. Milling, a resident magistrate, on 31 March, led to Westport being proclaimed; the murder of Constable O’Brien and the wounding of several others, during the rescue of a Sinn Fein prisoner from Limerick workhouse infirmary on 6 April, led to the proclamation of the district of Limerick.¹

The same policy was pursued, during the greater part of the year, towards the various revolutionary associations. They were allowed to carry on their propaganda, but whenever and wherever this led, or threatened to lead, to serious breaches of the peace they were proclaimed. Thus after a series of outrages, including a bomb attack on a police hut (21 July), the ambushing and murder of a constable (6 August), and the murder of a boy of fifteen (15 August), Sinn Fein ‘and kindred bodies’ were proclaimed in County Clare. On 10 September they were suppressed in the county and borough of Cork, and on the same date Tipperary, Limerick, Clare and the county and borough of Dublin were proclaimed under Section 1 of the Crimes Act (1887). All these proclamations were the result of definite outrages, which showed an alarming

¹ The prisoner, R. J. Byrne, condemned to a year’s imprisonment, had gone on hunger-strike and been removed to the infirmary. During visiting hours thirty armed men, who had mixed with the visitors, suddenly fell with bludgeons and revolvers on the five policemen guarding the prisoner; Byrne himself seized Constable S—— from behind round the waist, while others shot and bludgeoned him. The constable, however, succeeded in drawing his revolver and shooting Byrne under his arm. The Sinn Feiners got away with the prisoner, but he was mortally wounded. Some of the rescuers were traced to County Clare and arrested.

tendency to increase as the year went on, though as yet they were confined to a number of more or less limited areas in the south and west.

On 25 January the situation was further complicated by a great strike of the Belfast shipyard workers; but this had nothing to do with politics, and was settled on 19 February. More significant of political undercurrents was the attack by Mr. Joseph Devlin, in the House of Commons (4 March), on the Belfast Harbour Bill, the rejection of which he moved on the ground that, under the actual franchise, no Catholic was ever elected on the Board of Commissioners. Asked what religion had to do with this, Mr. Devlin replied, 'Religion, or irreligion, has everything to do with everything in Belfast.'¹

Meanwhile the result of the general election was leading to certain developments of opinion in the South, which are historically important rather for the influence they exercised outside Ireland than within it. On 24 January occurred the split in the Unionist party already mentioned, the Anti-Partition League, under the leadership of Lord Midleton, supporting a moderate form of Home Rule for all Ireland. On the same day was established, under the chairmanship of Captain Stephen Gwynn, the Irish Centre Party, which advocated self-government on the Dominion model for a united Ireland within the Empire. This subsequently developed into the Irish Dominion League, of which the moving spirit was Captain Henry Harrison, who, in early life a Parnellite, gained the Military Cross on the Western front during the war. Several former Unionists also attached themselves to this movement, including Sir Horace Plunkett and General Sir Hubert Gough. The organ of this association was the *Irish Statesman*, a high-class weekly. The group, however, represented no widespread opinion in the country, and its main success was in encouraging Lord Northcliffe to use his vast influence in the English press in favour of a solution of the Irish question which very few in Ireland cared or dared to support. During the year 1919, indeed, the columns of the newspapers, both in Ireland and Great Britain, were filled with letters offering the most varied suggestions for the solution of

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 1919, vol. 113, p. 329.

the question,¹ but in Ireland itself mass opinion seemed to have become stereotyped under one influence or another. With the internment of the leading Sinn Fein orators the flood of eloquence punctuated with revolver shots, which enlivened the first half of 1918, had stopped, and Ireland was divided into two camps, by no means silent, but more concerned with acts than arguments. In the North, though no attempt was made to revive the Volunteer force, the Ulstermen remained as determined as ever, and they made full use of the tactical advantage given them by the refusal of the Sinn Feiners to attend at Westminster. In the South, the Dail Eireann claimed the undivided allegiance of Irishmen, and enforced this claim with penalties which, since they were ruthlessly applied, tended more and more to make it effective.

The prestige of the Dail in Ireland was increased by the support it received in the United States, which had forgotten the warning uttered by Calhoun in 1848 against the too hasty support of improvised republican movements in Europe. The proclamation by President Wilson of the principle of 'self-determination' as the basis of the coming peace treaty, and its acceptance by the other Powers, gave Sinn Fein a lever which it was not slow to use; and the President himself, before a month or two's experience in Europe had taught him wisdom, had held out hopes that the Irish question would be raised at the Peace Conference. To the Sinn Feiners, at a very critical period, this hope seemed about to be realised when it was announced that the Prime Minister, then in Paris, had authorised the issue of passports to a deputation of three Irish-American gentlemen whose ostensible mission was to report on conditions in Ireland, but whose principal aim was to confer with 'President' De Valera on the question of securing international recognition of the Irish Republic at the Peace Conference.

The story of this mission is a curious one. The gentlemen to whom the Prime Minister showed this touching mark of confidence—Messrs. Frank P. Walsh, Edward T. Dunne and Michael J. Ryan—were closely associated with the Clan-na-Gael and other extremist Irish-American

¹ The more important of these are noted under their dates in the 'Diurnal' given in *Notes from Ireland* (Irish Unionist Alliance).

organisations, Mr. Walsh being chairman of the American Commission for Irish Independence. They had been commissioned by the Irish Race Convention, which met at Philadelphia on the 22nd of February, 'to visit France and obtain for the delegates selected by the people of Ireland a hearing at the Peace Conference and to place before the Conference the case of Ireland.'¹ On their arrival in Paris they had an interview with President Wilson, who, according to their own account, 'referred them to Colonel House, with instructions to say that he believed the request a proper one, and that it should be granted.'² Colonel House promised to take the matter up with Mr. Lloyd George immediately, and to use every effort to have safe-conducts to and from Paris granted to the delegates from Ireland. On the following day he told the 'commissioners' that he had communicated with the British Prime Minister, and that in all likelihood the safe-conducts would be granted; but that Mr. Lloyd George was very anxious to have a personal interview with them, and would be glad if Mr. Walsh would take the matter up with his confidential secretary, Mr. Philip Kerr. To this the 'commissioners' assented after some demur, but only on the 'clear understanding' that they were not to be referred to Mr. Lloyd George on the question of the passports, but that compliance with their request in this matter should be secured, if possible, by Colonel House and the American Delegation, their object of course being to commit the United States officially to the Irish cause. Mr. Lloyd George, however, showed no anxiety to meet them, and put them off for a fortnight on pretext of his preoccupation with the negotiations with Germany. The 'commissioners' suggested that they should utilize the interval for a visit to Ireland 'for the purpose of meeting the representatives of the Irish people and of making a first-hand investigation of conditions in Ireland.' The Prime Minister consented, and on the 1st of May sent them, through Sir William Wiseman, a request, 'assented to by Messrs. Sean T. O'Ceallaigh and George Gavan Duffy, the representatives at Paris of the Irish republican government,' that before

¹ See 66th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document 106, p. 805.

² *Ibid.* p. 822.

seeing him they should visit every part of Ireland. To this 'request' they of course assented, since it gave them an unhopèd-for opportunity for making mischief. Mr. Lloyd George thereupon, without consulting the Chief Secretary or any other members of the Cabinet, directed their passports to be amended so as to include 'an unofficial mission' to Ireland. The forms of the passports were also made diplomatic, 'which greatly facilitated their movements.'¹

These envoys, who to the Irish appeared to be invested with a quasi-official mission from the Peace Conference, arrived in Dublin on 3 May, and on the 9th were welcomed by the Dail in special session. Nor did they content themselves with enquiring, after their own fashion, into conditions in Ireland; they abused their quasi-diplomatic immunity to deliver violent harangues in which they commended the Irish people for having adopted those republican principles for which the United States had always stood. In these circumstances, when on the 12th they left for Paris to prepare their report and lay it before President Wilson, the nature of this report could hardly be doubtful, and it is not surprising that an eight days' stay in Ireland sufficed to supply them with the most amazing stories of English 'atrocities' and of English misgovernment and misbehaviour generally, which they proceeded to present to the American people and the American Congress as facts proved by unimpeachable evidence.² But their efforts to persuade President Wilson

¹ 'Report on Conditions in Ireland,' 66th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document 106, p. 822 ff.

² 'Much of the detailed evidence of atrocities committed against women prisoners in Ireland was furnished us by the Countess Markievicz.' This was written by Messrs. Walsh and Dunne in a letter to Mr. Lloyd George, dated Paris, June 19, 1919; so it is probable that they really did regard the adventurous Countess as an oracle of truth! See 66th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document 106, p. 817. The report of evidence given by the three envoys, with others, before the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate is given *verbatim* in the Document. The value of this evidence may perhaps be gauged by one or two quotations: 'When the Irish get together, north and south, they always agree' (p. 835). 'Ireland is the most law-abiding country on the face of the earth' (p. 835). Liberty Hall is the headquarters of 'the most conservative labor organization in the world' (p. 853). 'England allows no ship to come trans-Atlantic to her (Ireland's) ports' (p. 828). 'There is no religious question in the Irish movement' (p. 859). 'Mercenary Gurkhas are imported to police Ireland' (p. 906). All this, and much more, the Senate Committee apparently eagerly accepted at its face value.

to champion the cause of Irish Independence at the Conference were vain. As a result of their stay in Ireland Messrs. De Valera, Arthur Griffith and Plunkett, in a letter of the 17th of May, formally notified to M. Clemenceau, as President of the Conference, their appointment 'by the duly elected national government of Ireland to act on behalf of Ireland in the proceedings of the Peace Conference.' On the same day the 'commissioners' presented to the American Secretary of State, Mr. Robert Lansing, a letter requesting his good offices to procure safe-conducts for the delegates thus appointed. They had, however, over-reached themselves. From the first President Wilson had made it clear that Ireland had no separate *locus standi* at the Conference, and that, however greatly he might sympathise with the Irish cause, any representations he might make could only be unofficial. He now informed the 'commissioners,' through the Secretary of State, that it would be useless to present their request to the British Prime Minister, owing to their 'offensive utterances' while in Ireland. In vain they pointed out that their request had recently been reinforced by a resolution of the United States Senate to the same effect; further correspondence followed, but on 31 May the American Peace Delegation definitely refused to request the Conference to receive 'the representatives of the so-called Irish Republic.'¹ A personal interview with President Wilson on 11 June had no better result. It was useless for them to remind him that he himself had stated at the plenary session of the Conference on 25 January that among the instructions of the American delegates, of which 'they would not abate one jot,' was that of seeing 'that every people in the world shall choose its own master.'² The President had recognised by this time that, in loudly championing the principle of self-determination, he had brought to Europe not peace but a sword. 'You have touched on the great metaphysical tragedy of to-day,' he said; 'my words have raised hopes in the hearts of millions of people. . . . When I gave utterance to those words, I said them without the

¹ *Senate, Document 106, cit.* p. 809.

² *Ibid.* p. 280 *seq.*

knowledge that nationalities existed, which are coming to us day by day.'¹

Disappointed in their hopes of obtaining satisfaction from the Peace Conference, the Sinn Feiners determined to use their widespread organisation in an attempt to wreck its work, and especially the League of Nations, which they had supported so long as they believed that independent Ireland would be represented in its assembly. To this end an intensive propaganda campaign was started in the United States. This proved once more the amazing genius of the Irish for political housebreaking. It was persistent, able, and utterly regardless of truth, or even of probability; and it was immensely helped by the powerful Irish-American political organisations and by the fact that many of the most influential journals were in Irish hands. The counter-propaganda of the British Government was feeble beyond words. A few professors and politicians, either Nationalists or of Nationalist sympathies, were sent out to talk platitudes about self-determination and the pure intentions of Great Britain as the divinely appointed protector of small and oppressed nationalities; a certain number of articles to the same effect were published in the more reputable newspapers and magazines; but no real effort was made to meet the specific charges brought against British action in Ireland; or, if such an effort was made, it certainly did not succeed in reaching the mass of the American public. The Sinn Fein propaganda, on the other hand, penetrated to the most obscure local newspapers—the only reading

¹ Interview between President Wilson and Messrs. Edward F. Dunne and Frank P. Walsh, at the President's house, 11 Place des États Unis, Paris, Wednesday, 11 June 1919 (*Senate Document*, 106, pp. 835 seq.). Compare Senator David Walsh, of Massachusetts, in his speech of 16 March 1920: 'Why are the friends of Egypt, Ireland, Korea here? Why have they been seeking through all these recent months for America's recognition of their right to self-determination? It is because America, through the inspiring words of her chief Executive, stirred to hope—yes, stirred to action—every subject race and its sympathizers throughout the world.'

'In this connection,' said Senator Knox in his speech of 17 June 1920, 'it may be worth while to have in mind the announcement from Paris that our President has declared that the Irish question—the political dynamite of the Anglo-Saxon race—might properly be the subject of consideration by the league when established, and the suggestion heard in the United States that, by parity of reasoning, it may be contended that the Negro question in the United States—for we have such a question, vital, far-reaching and ominous—might receive a like consideration.'

of the people—which published, uncontradicted, wild tales of British barbarity and British perfidy, to be swallowed with a childlike faith by a people whose credulity knows no bounds. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the Irish question became almost as troublesome to politicians at Washington as to politicians at Westminster.

The trouble was increased by the sudden arrival of De Valera in the United States. On the 4th of February 1919 he had succeeded in escaping from Lincoln gaol with two companions. The release of the interned prisoners early in March regularised his position, and enabled him to give the American delegates a presidential reception in Dublin. After the breakdown of the negotiations, however, he decided to transfer his activities to the United States, which he succeeded in reaching in disguise. The attitude of the American Government towards this somewhat disconcerting visitor was correct; but in New York, and other large cities where the Irish-American vote predominated, he was received with all the honours due to the President of the Irish Republic, and in some cases State Legislatures went out of their way to give him recognition.

Meanwhile, over the whole United States, a net-work of Irish societies, old and new, had been organising a vast united effort to bring pressure to bear on the Government at Washington to recognise the independence of Ireland. The Knights of the Red Branch of San Francisco joined to this end with the Fraternal Order of Eagles of Woonsocket; Robert Emmet Associations, Wolfe Tone Associations, Friends of Ireland, and, most influential of all, Friends of Irish Freedom sprang up like mushrooms everywhere. They enlisted in their cause, not only the German element, but large numbers of Roman Catholic 'hyphenated' Americans of other nationalities, with the result that, though they formed all told but a small minority of the American people, they succeeded in producing the effect of a vast agitation exceedingly alarming to Senators and Congressmen trembling for their seats. The agitation reached its climax in the early winter of 1918, when the week from the 8th to the 15th of December was set apart by the Friends of Irish Free-

dom as 'Self-determination Week.' The Roman Catholic Church gave its official support to the movement. At Boston, on the 9th, a mixed meeting of fifteen thousand Roman Catholics 'of every nationality,' presided over by the Cardinal Archbishop, unanimously resolved to call on the United States Government to secure the recognition of Ireland as a free and independent State. On the following day the same resolution was carried at a vast meeting held in Madison Square, New York, at which Cardinal O'Connell also spoke, arguing that Ireland was of all nations the one most fit for freedom, since it was universally recognised as the most Christian country in the world. A similar demonstration at Chicago, on the 15th, was presided over by Archbishop Mundeleine.

The object of this intensified agitation was apparent when, on the 12th of December, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives at Washington met to consider a resolution introduced by Mr. Thomas Gallagher, a representative for Illinois, calling on the American plenipotentiaries at the Peace Conference 'to present to the said conference the right of Ireland to freedom, independence, and self-determination.' No less than thirty-two delegations from all parts of the United States gave evidence before this committee, and, with one exception, all in one sense—that of Sinn Féin. For eight hours the misdoings, past and present, of Great Britain in Ireland were detailed to a highly sympathetic committee, sometimes with passionate conviction, nearly always with the utmost economy of truth. Only one spokesman, Mr. George Fox, came to plead on the other side, and he was only allowed fifteen minutes in which to attempt to expose the absurdities which at this amazing inquest passed for evidence.¹ In the sequel, however, Congress itself proved slightly more sane than its committee. The Gallagher Resolution was, indeed, passed on the 4th of March 1919 by a majority of 216 to 45, but in a less obviously offensive form. It was resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring, 'that it is the earnest hope of the United States of America that the Peace Conference now sitting in Paris and passing

¹ 65th Congress, 3rd Session, House of Representatives Document No. 1832, 'The Irish Question.'

upon the rights of various peoples will favourably consider the claim of Ireland to the right of self-determination.' It was the first of a series of efforts on the part of the American Congress to interfere in the internal concerns of a great and friendly nation. They culminated in the astonishing action of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate in adopting the 15th Reservation to the Covenant of the League of Nations, which, had it become effective, would—as Senator Lenroot of Wisconsin pointed out—have committed the United States not only to the support of Irish independence, but to the principle of self-determination, 'which had never been upheld by them in the past, and would be hard to swallow by those few remaining who fought through the Civil War to preserve the Union against the doctrine of secession and self-determination.' Senator Knox had been right when, in his speech of the 18th of December 1918, he said: 'It may be that we shall have to guard against letting the phrase "Self-determination of Peoples" run away with us.'¹

These aberrations of their legislators did not pass without vigorous protests on the part of Americans in general, among whom the old sense of kinship with England had been revived by the comradeship of the Great War. They were puzzled by Great Britain's failure to settle the Irish question, of the peculiar difficulties of which they had no means of judging; and they wanted for their own sakes to see it settled. But they resented the claim of a noisy minority, ardent supporters at the outset of the German cause, to speak in the name of the people of the United States, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of which were still of English race and the Protestant religion. The powerful organisation of the American Legion, in which thousands of ex-service men were enrolled, held numerous meetings of protest, at which resolutions were passed declaring that 'the public reception of Emilio De Valera, an American citizen,'² calling

¹ 'Is the phrase,' he asked, 'always sure to possess an absolute merit that it lacked, for example, in America in the 'sixties?' He might have added earlier and later dates, from the annexations of Louisiana and the Floridas to that of the Philippines and Porto Rico.

² He was the son of an Irish-American woman by a Latin-American father, and was born in New York. He was brought to Ireland as a baby.

himself President of the Irish Republic, is an insult to the men who were in the service of the United States, and is a reflection on the cause for which our comrades fought and died.' When, in December 1919, the Committee on Foreign Affairs again met to consider a resolution 'to provide for the salaries of a Minister and Consuls to the Republic of Ireland,' the evidence laid before it was not so one-sided, and contained therefore a fair percentage of truth. The meeting of the year before had been of the nature of a *coup d'état*; it had been arranged in collusion with the Sinn Fein organisations; no adequate notice had been given, and consequently those loyal to the association with Great Britain had had no time to organise a counter-demonstration. It was otherwise on the present occasion. Spokesmen appeared against the resolution who claimed to represent, not twenty million 'Americans of Irish race,' but ninety million 'hundred per cent. Americans.'¹

The agitation conducted by De Valera and his friends in the United States belongs, of course, to the history of Ireland only in so far as it reacted upon this. The reaction, however, was great. Sinn Fein was encouraged by the sympathy with its aims and aspirations shown by large numbers of the American public, and by an attitude of the American Congress which gave hopes of an effective intervention of the United States in favour of Irish independence. It was helped in more practical fashion by the response made in America to the invitation issued, in September 1918, by Dail Eireann, to subscribe to a loan guaranteed by the Irish Republic. This provided the Sinn Fein organisation with the necessary funds, and enabled it to perfect the system of terror which was ultimately to carry it to victory.

¹ *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs. House of Representatives. 66th Congress. Second Series on H.R. 3404. Dec. 12, 13, 1919.*

CHAPTER IX

THE SINN FEIN TERROR

Organisation of the Terror—Beginning of the 'war'—Boycott of the Police—Assassination of constables—Attacks on soldiers—Reprisals—The Fermoy incident—'Proclamation' of Dail Eireann—Action against the seditious Press—The Government and the hunger-strikers—The Sinn Fein organisations 'proclaimed'—Protests of 'moderates'—Attack on the Lord-Lieutenant—Campaign of murder begun—The Home Rule Bill of 1920—Reception in Ireland—The Education Bill—Organisation of the murder campaign—Assassination of the Lord Mayor of Cork and others—Massacre of British officers in Dublin—Predominance of Sinn Fein—Reasons for this—General character of the Terror—Attitude of the Roman Catholic Bishops—The Corporation of Dublin and other local bodies declare for Sinn Fein—Paralysis of the Royal Courts—The Sinn Fein Courts.

THE organisation of the terror in Ireland proceeded apace during the year 1919. The Republican Army (I.R.A.) was supplied with arms partly by numerous raids on private houses, partly by the overwhelming of small parties of police or soldiers, and increasingly as time went on by shipments from the United States and elsewhere, which, on a coast so wild and indented as that of Ireland, there was little difficulty in smuggling in. Illegal drilling continued, and occasionally led to fights with the police, as at Kiltrush, in West Clare, on the 15th of April. But the most effective weapon was the boycott. It had early been applied against those who had dared to vote against Mr. De Valera in East Clare;¹ at the 'President's' request it was now to be applied universally to the police.

Before Sinn Fein brought its blessings to Ireland the Royal Irish Constabulary had been the friends of everyone. The service was exceedingly popular, there being often a hundred applications for one vacancy in the ranks. It was an armed and disciplined force, it is true, but in

¹ The County Inspector of the R.I.C. reported 'a tendency to boycott those who had voted for Mr. Lynch (the Nationalist candidate)' (*Intelligence Notes*, 1916).

so wild and lawless a country as much of Ireland is, this was as necessary as the arming of the sheriffs in the western States of America. The force, moreover, was wholly manned by Irishmen drawn, for the most part, from the ranks of the Catholic peasantry. These men very rarely used their arms. Their main duties consisted in checking ordinary crime, in preventing the illegal distilling of poteen, in protecting boycotted persons, and in saving the tails of 'unpopular' farmers' cattle from the knives of their neighbours. They were debarred from voting or from taking any other part in politics. Their functions in this respect were limited to trying to keep the peace between the contending factions, and they never intervened in debates until the champions of rival ideals had exhausted their armoury of abuse and, as is the way in Ireland, continued the argument with weapons more or less lethal. These men, whose splendid courage and faithfulness to their trust had been and were yet to be so often proved, were now to be treated as pariahs and outcasts. On the 26th of April the Executive Committee of the Cumann na mBan, the quasi-military Sinn Fein women's organisation, issued instructions to its members not to be in company with nor to speak to a policeman, not even to occupy the same bench in church. At the same time the following diatribe, under the title 'Aceldama (The Field of Blood),' was circulated, with the instruction: 'Copy this out accurately four times and send it to four of your friends':

For money their hands are dipped in the blood of their people. . . .

They are the eyes and ears of the enemy.

Let those eyes and ears know no friendship.

Let them be outcasts in their own land.

The blood of the martyrs shall be on them and their children's children, and they shall curse the mothers that bring them forth.

There was, of course, no hardship in being deprived of the society of the ladies of the Cumann na mBan, and this the constables might have borne with philosophy. But an economic war was soon added to the social boycott, and in many districts no tradesman or farmer dared to supply

the police or their families with the very necessities of life. Presently, too, an organised campaign of assassination was directed against them. In denouncing from the altar the cowardly murder of Sergeant Brady, at Lorrha in County Tipperary, the parish priest—the Church had not yet quavered into silence—said: ‘It is stated—I do not know if it is true—that fifteen men are appointed in each district to shoot the police.’¹ It was at least near enough to the truth. It was presently known to the police that their assassins were paid from £60 to £100 for every constable shot;² and the murderers earned this reward with perfect impunity, since no one dared to give evidence against them, and no jury dared to convict. It is, then, perhaps not surprising that, after many months of waiting upon the law in vain, the magnificent discipline of the force suffered, and that its members from time to time took the law into their own hands.³

The first reprisals, however, were the work not of the police but of soldiers. The episode is so characteristic of innumerable others that followed that it is worth recording in some detail. At about 10.45 on the morning of Sunday, the 7th of September, while a party of the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry were on their way to attend service in the Wesleyan church in Fermoy, in County Cork, they were suddenly attacked by a number of armed men, who were waiting in motor-cars. One soldier was killed, and four were wounded. The military, who were

¹ *Irish Times*, 18 September 1919.

² ‘The murders are done by gangs of murderers hired and paid probably by Sinn Fein, though that is not certain, but someone pays them, as they do no work and always have money.’—Report of a Divisional Commissioner R.I.C. Elsewhere he writes: ‘It must be remembered that it is because the Police are law-abiding that they suffer this. The Sinn Feiners and rebels acknowledge no law. Did the Police throw aside the law and act for themselves, no one would dare to murder any of them.’

³ Over the Government the Sinn Fein organisation had one decisive advantage—that its punishments were *certain* and ruthless. The ‘gunman’ who failed his employers was as good as dead. The gunman who fell into the hands of the police had, so long as the forms of law prevailed, nine chances in ten of escaping scot free. It was exceedingly hard to obtain a conviction; if the prisoner was convicted, the chances were that the death sentence would not be carried out; if the sentence was commuted to imprisonment, the chances were that the prisoner would be released, either as the result of a hunger-strike, or in the course of one of those periodical efforts at ‘conciliation’ in which the Government indulged. It was, in short, far safer to be true to the Sinn Fein cause than to that of the Government.

taken completely by surprise, were overpowered; their rifles were taken from them, and their assailants, jumping into their cars, drove rapidly away. At the Coroner's inquest held next day on the body of the man killed, the District Inspector of the R.I.C., who conducted the case on behalf of the authorities, declared it to be a clear case of murder, and asked the jury to find a verdict accordingly. The contrary bias of the court was, however, plain. The Coroner went out of his way to describe the attack as 'an act of actual warfare.' He added that 'it was well thought out,' and that 'it would take military strategy of the highest order to equal it.' The jury refused to return a verdict of wilful murder, finding 'that the deceased man died from a bullet wound caused by some person unknown,' and expressing the customary 'sincere sympathy with the relatives of the deceased.' Enraged by a verdict in flat contradiction with the evidence and the law, the comrades of the dead man invaded the town that evening and wrecked the shops of the tradesmen who had served on the jury.¹ Thus, with the breakdown of the ordinary organs of the law, began the process of reprisals which during the following years was to lay a great part of Ireland in ruins.

Speaking at Glasgow on 1 September, Mr. Joseph Devlin said that Ireland had 'never been more prosperous.'² It had also rarely been more disturbed; and at Belfast on 11 September Lord French declared that to restore order the Government would, if necessary, use the most drastic means. On the following day Dail Eireann was at last proclaimed as a dangerous association, and extensive military raids on Sinn Fein centres were carried out everywhere in a systematic search for arms and seditious literature. During the month, also, a considerable number of Sinn Fein newspapers were suppressed in Dublin and the provinces. On the 22nd the seriousness of the situation was advertised by the arming of the constabulary with hand-grenades. Outrages, however, including several brutal murders,³ continued, and were followed

¹ *Irish Times*, 18 September 1919.

² In an article on Ireland in *The Times* (4 Nov.) Professor A. L. P. Dennis, of Wisconsin University, described Ireland as 'a land of plenty.'

³ In Clare, on Oct. 21, a farmer was murdered, and his wife kicked and beaten, by masked men.

by further proclamations and arrests. The arrests were followed in their turn by hunger-strikes, and the prisoners continued to be released. Matters became worse in November; systematic attacks on police barracks now became frequent; raids for arms continued, including one on the American steamship *Pensacola* at Cork (5 November); on the 10th and 11th there were serious riots in Cork city; and on the 19th a new precedent was set by the burning down of the petty sessions court at Liscarroll, County Cork. In these circumstances the Government found it necessary to take additional powers. On 16 October the city and county of Dublin had been proclaimed under the Crimes Act; on 13 November the proclamation was extended to considerable areas of the country; on the 24th the Government announced in Parliament that hunger-strikers would no longer be released, but must, 'if they wouldn't take their food, take the consequences'; and on the 27th the Sinn Fein Organisation, the Sinn Fein Clubs, Cumann na mBan, etc., which had been proclaimed in Dublin on 16 October, were banned by proclamation in all Ireland.

Meanwhile abortive efforts had been made to arrive at an accommodation, Lord Southborough's¹ offer of his services to this end (30 October) being contemptuously rejected by Arthur Griffith in the name of Sinn Fein. The situation was not improved by the issue (20 November) of the report of the Irish Dominion League, which advertised the tendency of the 'moderate' elements towards Sinn Fein; by the declaration of Sir Horace Plunkett that 'civil management must be substituted for Prussian militarism';² and by his denunciation of the proclamation of Sinn Fein. The endorsement of this attitude by an influential section of the British press merely persuaded the Sinn Feiners that their policy of violence was on the eve of success, and that it only needed to be accentuated to make success certain. The month of December, accordingly, saw a great increase in the number of outrages, which gave evidence also of increasing organisation. All Dublin was horror-struck by the murder on 1 December of Detective-Sergeant Barton, a

¹ Secretary to the Irish Convention (see above).

² At the National Liberal Club, 30 Oct.

very popular officer, which was carried out in a populous thoroughfare in the heart of the city. It was the first conspicuous sign of the terror which was to dominate the country during many months to come. The nature of this terror may be understood by the fact that when, on the 19th, a school-teacher named Blanchfield was murdered near Kinsale, the body lay for hours where it fell, as none of the villagers dared to touch it. Several cases were also reported of policemen, mortally wounded, lying unattended in crowded streets, no one daring even to give them a drink of water. On the 20th a murderous attack was made on the Lord-Lieutenant, Viscount French of Ypres, as he was motoring from Ashtown station to the Vice-regal Lodge. Happily none of the bombs and shots discharged at the viceregal party took effect; but one of the assailants, a youth named Michael Savage, was killed. On the 22nd the offices of the *Irish Independent* were raided, and the machinery smashed, by masked men because the editor had described this young man as 'a would-be assassin.' Murders, assaults, highway robberies, cattle drivings, burnings, attempts to wreck trains—such was the situation in Ireland when, on the eve of the close of the parliamentary session, the Chief Secretary, Mr. Ian Macpherson, and Mr. Lloyd George introduced the new Government of Ireland Bill.

This measure proposed to set up in Ireland two parliaments, one for the six counties of North-East Ulster, another for the rest of Ireland. The unity of Ireland was to be preserved by a Council of Ireland, consisting of members nominated by the two parliaments, 'with a view to the eventual establishment of a parliament for the whole of Ireland, and to bringing about harmonious action between the parliaments and governments of southern Ireland and northern Ireland, and to the promotion of mutual intercourse and uniformity in relation to matters affecting the whole of Ireland, and to providing for the administration of services which the two parliaments mutually agree should be administered uniformly throughout the whole of Ireland.' It was proposed, under Section 3, that the two parliaments, by identical Acts agreed to by an absolute majority of the House of Commons of each parliament, should have power to establish, in lieu of the

Council, a parliament for the whole of Ireland. Imperial services—army, navy, foreign relations, etc.—were reserved to the Imperial Parliament; but certain services, e.g. the post office, were to be transferred if and when the two parliaments should agree to merge into one, while, in this event, the vexed question of customs and excise was to be settled by agreement between the Irish and Imperial Parliaments. The contribution of Ireland to Imperial expenditure was provisionally fixed at £18,000,000 per annum.

The reception met with in Ireland by this attempt to reconcile the principle of the self-determination of Ireland with that of the self-determination of Ulster and the interests of Great Britain and the Empire was not encouraging. The Sinn Feiners and Nationalists generally refused to have anything to say to a scheme which, in view of the temper of Ulster, seemed to make the partition of Ireland permanent, and certainly fell very short of the ideal of national independence. The Unionists in the South, and especially those of the three Ulster counties excluded from the northern parliamentary area, denounced the Bill as a betrayal of their interests, since it left the Protestants elsewhere than in the Six Counties in a hopeless minority; while the Roman Catholic hierarchy equally denounced 'an impossible scheme' which subjected the Catholics of the North to a Protestant parliament. Only the Ulstermen accepted the settlement, not because they liked it, but because they saw in it the only alternative to the automatic coming into force of the Home Rule Act of 1914.¹ In all Ireland there was no single group of men who welcomed this measure which, by a crowning paradox, seemed to be destined to give Home Rule to the only part of the country which most earnestly did not want it; for in the South it was universally believed that, in the event of the Bill becoming law, no one outside the Six Counties would care or dare to try and make it effective.

¹ Resolution of the Ulster Unionist Council (*The Times*, 11 March, 1920). 'The decisions of the Council that day had been momentous. They would take no responsibility for the Home Rule Bill. . . . It was all very well to say "Why don't you go on fighting as you did before?" What were they to fight for? Could they fight for more than the freeing of Ulster from a Home Rule Parliament in Dublin? If the Bill passed they had won, and won without fighting' (Sir Edward Carson to the Ulster Unionist Labour Association, *ibid.*).

Even more immediately unhappy was the effort of the Government to clear the way for Home Rule by removing the deep-seated grievance of the Irish school-teachers, which had been one of the strongest recruiting agencies of Sinn Fein. The teachers had for long past been grossly underpaid; they were at the mercy of their clerical school managers; and neither of these wrongs could be righted without introducing into Ireland the principle of popular control, which had long been established in Great Britain. Two specially appointed Viceregal Commissions had recently reported on the subject, and their reports had been signed unanimously by the Irish Roman Catholic representatives. When, therefore, on the 24th of November 1919, Mr. Ian Macpherson, the Chief Secretary, introduced in the House of Commons an Education Bill embodying the recommendations of the reports, he did so with some confidence that it would be welcomed in Ireland. By the school-teachers it was indeed welcomed; but the hierarchy at once protested against a measure which threatened their autocratic control of the schools, their protest was supported by the Council of the (Catholic) National University, and after nearly a year of abortive effort the Bill was shelved.

One great remedial measure had thus broken down once more on the opposition of the Irish hierarchy; another, the Labourers' (Ireland) Act, passed unnoticed in the general turmoil. The situation, indeed, was rapidly passing beyond the stage when the Government could hope to meet it by a policy of alternate 'conciliation' and 'coercion.' Hitherto the campaign of murder and of intimidation generally had been sporadic, and to a certain extent spontaneous. Early in 1920 it received a definite organisation, and this in the course of the year spread its net-work all over the country. Militant Sinn Fein was probably, indeed, still in a minority in Ireland; but it was now an armed and highly organised minority, and all revolutions have been the work of such minorities. Its branches, like those of the Jacobin Club in revolutionary France, were in correspondence everywhere, and presently it had established a system of espionage and terrorism only equalled by that of the Jacobins. The principle underlying this system was that the Republic, as established

by Dail Eireann, was the sole legitimate Government in Ireland, and that the guiding maxim of legitimate governments must always be *salus populi suprema lex*. To serve the usurping 'foreign' Government was treason to the Republic, and to be punished as such. Hence the innumerable 'executions' of policemen and other humble servitors of the State, as well as of high officials, magistrates, and private persons who were suspected of being 'informers' or were rash enough to express 'treasonable' opinions above a whisper. These 'executions' were carried out in broad daylight, in the crowded streets of cities, in the smoking-rooms of clubs, in the bar-rooms and bedrooms of hotels, and no one knew by whom the sentences were passed nor what process of trial, if any, was used in arriving at them. The murders were, with few exceptions, carried out with perfect impunity; for such was the terror that no one dared to interfere or to come forward as a witness,¹ and in the few cases where arrests were effected the Government had generally to depend on the evidence of soldiers and police, if any happened to have been present.

It is impossible here even to outline the terrible tale of crime which stains the annals of Ireland during 1920, the most bloody since the mutual slaughter of 1798. Most of the victims were of humble rank, usually policemen and soldiers, done to death on the instructions issued towards the close of 1919 by Sinn Fein—or the hidden force masquerading under its name.² The comparative numbers tell their own tale. From 1 May to 31 December 1919 eighteen policemen had been murdered in Ireland; the number from 1 January to 18 December 1920 was 176 killed and 251 wounded, in addition to 54 soldiers killed and 118 wounded. From time to time there were more conspicuous victims. On the 20th of March the Lord Mayor of Cork, Alderman McCurtin, was done to death by a band of masked men. The affair was surrounded with mystery, for the victim was a prominent Sinn Feiner.

¹ I.e. for the prosecution. Witnesses for the defence, to prove an alibi, could always be found in abundance.

² The part played by the Irish Republican Brotherhood in all this was doubtless great, but is necessarily obscure. For its constitution, rules, and the nature of its activities see H. B. C. Pollard, *The Secret Societies of Ireland* (1922).

The Coroner's jury found that the murder had been committed by men of the Royal Irish Constabulary acting under the directions of the Government, and brought in a verdict of wilful murder against Mr. Lloyd George, Lord French, Mr. Ian Macpherson, Acting Inspector-General Smith, R.I.C., and District Inspector Swanzy. Six days later (24 April) the Cork Corporation, with a characteristic lack of the sense of humour, resolved to call on the Executive of the Irish Republic to bring this verdict to the notice of foreign governments. It was known to the authorities, however, that the Lord Mayor, who was said to have refused to sanction the use of the Corporation funds for the purposes of the 'war,' and had certainly asked for police protection, was 'executed' as an object-lesson to weak-kneed supporters of the cause.

Of other crimes—and the catalogue is far too long to give here—three of outstanding atrocity call for mention. On the 27th of March Mr. Alan Bell, an experienced resident magistrate, who had been holding a secret inquiry under the Crimes Act, was dragged from a crowded tram-car near Dublin by a band of armed men and shot dead by the road-side. On the 31st of July Mr. Frank Brooke, a member of the Irish Privy Council and chairman of the South Eastern Railway Company, was shot dead by armed men in his office at Westland Row station. In neither of these cases were the murderers caught. But the blackest day of crime was Sunday, the 21st of November, remembered in Dublin as 'Red Sunday.' At this time British officers on duty in the capital were still allowed to live scattered in their own houses, in hotels, or in lodgings. It was assumed that the attacks on soldiers had been exclusively for the purpose of obtaining arms, and it was therefore considered a sufficient protection for these officers, who were mainly engaged in court-martial work—and as often as not in the interests of prisoners—that they should be known to be unarmed. The official report stated that 'the Sinn Feiners were becoming alarmed at the quantity of information which the authorities were receiving, and that they desired to destroy the evidence and, at the same time, terrorise the officers connected with the machinery of justice.' However this may be, at nine o'clock on that Sunday morning bands of armed men,

undisguised and in some cases led by girls, called at eight separate houses, obtained an entrance on one pretext or another, found the young officers either in bed or just getting up, and shot them down in cold blood, sometimes in the presence of their wives. Some succeeded in escaping, but in all fourteen were killed. This cowardly massacre, which showed the most elaborate preparation, gave proof of the most revolting treachery, and for a moment awakened even the British public from its apathy about Irish affairs, received the high approval of De Valera in America, and—to judge by the description of it by Father Dominic, Lord Mayor MacSwiney's chaplain, as 'a wonderful day'—was regarded by the fanatics of Sinn Fein as a glorious victory.¹

Yet to say that Sinn Fein organised or approved these crimes, without qualification, would be to give a false impression. For certainly all Catholic Ireland did not approve them; and Catholic Ireland, with rare exceptions, was by this time Sinn Fein. In the case of very many people, this adherence was due to the terror, but it would be untrue to pretend that this cause alone operated. Among the young people, especially, the Sinn Fein creed had by this time developed into something like a religious fanaticism. Since the rebellion of 1916 a whole new generation of boys and girls had grown up, baptised in the blood of the martyrs, trained to regard Ireland as the centre of the universe and England as the barbarous oppressor who for seven hundred years past had arrested her development and obscured her glory, and firmly convinced that, if only the yoke of the barbarian could be shaken off, Ireland would once again become a pattern of civilisation to the nations. And behind this crude idealism was the economic pressure of the young manhood of the country, cooped within its narrow limits without any outlet for their energies and their ambitions. These were the recruits, inexorably conscribed, of the armies of the 'Republic' and the executors of its decrees. The great majority of this army consisted of shop assistants and town labourers. If the farmers and the petty tradesmen professed and called themselves Sinn Feiners, this was

¹ For an eye-witness's account see 'Experiences of an Officer's Wife in Ireland,' *Blackwood's Magazine* for May 1921, vol. ccix. no. mclxvii.

often but an accommodation to circumstances; and the term Sinn Fein, covering a variety of aspirations, might mean much or little—at most an intransigent faith, at least a mantle of protection against an ever present fear. And the terror was the more poignant since its sources remained obscure. [None could tell what sinister forces lurked behind the self-styled 'Republic,' who really issued the orders in the name of Dail Eireann, or who held command at the elusive 'head-quarters' of the Irish Republican Army.] And to the welter thus produced was presently added an orgy of private crime, ancient vendettas being satisfied under the disguise of one or other of the warring forces,¹ while burglaries and highway robberies became common.

The moral disintegration which was revealed by this state of things, and was to reach yet more terrible proportions later, alarmed the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, which in all matters of faith and morals had been accustomed to exercise an autocratic authority over the mass of the Irish people. Cardinal Logue, Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, and other bishops publicly expressed their 'loathing and detestation' of the murders of the 21st of November. Some even ventured to attack the whole conduct of the Irish Republican Army, condemning murders, kidnapping and arson, and denouncing ambushes as cowardly and criminal.² The greatest sensation was caused by the action of Dr. Cohalan, Bishop of Cork, who launched sentence of excommunication against the murderers of policemen and others, and justified this proceeding in a pastoral letter which was read at High Mass in all the churches of his diocese on Sunday the 19th of December 1920. The killing of police, he said, was 'morally, murder, and, politically, of no consequence, and the burning of barracks was simply the destruction of Irish property.'³

It is said that Bishop Cohalan's courageous action was in the nature of a *ballon d'essai*, to test the probable effect

¹ This undoubtedly accounts for several mysterious murders, charged (according to taste) to Sinn Fein or to the Crown forces.

² Dr. Cohalan said in his Pastoral that 'ambushers take very little risk to themselves,' and the Archbishop of Tuam denounced ambushers as 'criminal' (*Western News*, 5 March 1921).

³ Reported in *Weekly Irish Times*, 25 Dec. 1920.

of a joint pronouncement by the bishops, who were then assembled at Maynooth. If so, the experiment was decisive; for no such joint pastoral was issued. The episcopal thunder, in fact, reverberated harmlessly into empty space; and its only immediate result was to expose the bold Bishop of Cork to the slings and arrows of outrageous patriots. The American Association for the Recognition of Irish Independence cabled a protest against this use of his spiritual authority 'in British interests.' 'You have no right,' said these champions of the Irish-American conception of liberty, 'to excommunicate Irishmen for defending their country. Irish priests must not be used to disarm the Irish people. Your assertion that killing British military is murder is a libel upon the patriots of 1776, who shot down from ambush the military on their return from Lexington.' To this the Bishop very properly replied 'Nonsense!' He was defenceless, however, against the assaults of his own flock. The local Sinn Féin organisation warned him roundly not to interfere in politics, and the Sinn Féin press generally made it clear that Young Ireland would not tolerate any excursions of ecclesiastical authority into the secular sphere.¹

The moral impotence of the Bishops was largely due to their own equivocal attitude. They denounced murder, it is true, but they never failed at the same time to denounce the Government action which, according to them, had provoked it. Above all, they thundered against the stern measures by which alone—as the experience of the Free State Government was later to prove—the distempers of the country could be cured. Dr. Cohalan, in the Pastoral above quoted, while defending a poor murdered constable named Murtagh against baseless charges, assumed without a shadow of proof that Lord Mayor McCurtin had been assassinated by the police as a reprisal for this murder. A few weeks later, in February 1921, he was denouncing the execution of certain gunmen who

¹ A characteristic attack on the Bishops was made in *Old Ireland* for 5 March 1921 (New Ser., vol. iii. no. 10): 'We are loth to accuse the Bishops of treason,' wrote this organ of public opinion, 'but it is time for Dail Eireann to assert itself.' It appears that Dr. Gilmartin, Archbishop of Tuam, had persuaded some of his people to surrender their arms, and that Dr. Brownrigg, Bishop of Kilkenny, had attacked the I.R.A.

had done six British soldiers to death in his own city of Cork. The language in which he did so was hardly calculated to reinforce the moral of the Pastoral. 'The Government,' he said, 'think they will break the spirit of the young men of Ireland by these executions. They will only succeed in driving every one into the ranks of the I.R.A. as they drove the country into the arms of Sinn Fein in 1916. It is shocking to execute these young men when their organisation and action were provoked by misgovernment.'

This attitude of the Bishop of Cork was typical of that of most of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. Dr. Cohalan was a Christian gentleman and prelate; but he was also an ardent republican; and the characters were, in the circumstances of the time, difficult to combine. Hence the mixture of condemnation and excuse in dealing with the criminal vagaries of a recalcitrant flock. Unhappily, human nature being what it is, authority is listened to more attentively when it excuses than when it condemns; and it is not surprising that the Catholic Irish, confused by the two voices, should have ended by gambolling irresponsibly away from the fold, deaf to the moral admonitions of their pastors.

Meanwhile, however, while Sinn Fein successfully resisted the efforts of the Church to interfere with its peculiar methods of conducting the 'war with England,' it attempted for a time to set its face against certain private crimes which were the natural outcome of these methods. With the break-down of the legal organs of Government, during the early months of 1920, in large parts of the country, the Sinn Fein organisation gradually took over the administration. The municipal elections in January, though the new principle of proportional representation introduced under the Act of 1919 here and there produced remarkable results,¹ placed Sinn Fein in the majority in most of the corporations and councils of the south and west, which is not surprising, since apart from the intense resentment at the proposed partition of

¹ A few Unionists, for the first time, were elected in constituencies which had always been solidly Nationalist, while the Belfast corporation, also for the first time, included a minority of Nationalists and Sinn Feiners.

Ireland, the Sinn Fein organisation had long since made it clear that those who refused allegiance to the 'Republic' would be under its ban.¹ The election of Alderman T. Kelly, who was interned in England, as Lord Mayor of Dublin (January 24), the hoisting of the Sinn Fein flag on the City Hall, and the removal of the sword and mace² from the council chamber as 'relics of barbarism,' advertised the new spirit of the Nationalist municipalities. It was not, however, until 4 May that the Dublin corporation resolved formally to acknowledge the authority of Dail Eireann and to undertake to give effect to its decrees, and its example was soon followed by other corporations, and by county and district councils. On 14 April Sinn Fein 'head-quarters' had defined its policy with regard to these bodies: all the old councillors were to stand aside and give place to younger men who would refuse to recognise the Local Government Board, and who, being without property, could not be made liable for damages in resisting the Government. The result was, of course, the complete confusion of local administration; for the refusal of the elected bodies to submit their accounts to the Board's inspector was met by the refusal of the Government to make the statutory grants in aid of rates. The mutual boycott continued in many cases into the following year. It was combined with the wrecking and burning of inland revenue offices and the looting of Government money from post-office vans and mail trains. At the same time a general destruction of Government property began, starting with the police 'barracks,' which in many parts of the country had been left unprotected owing to the necessity of concentrating the police.³ Many empty country houses, suspected of having been requisitioned by the military, were also burned down.

Meanwhile Sinn Fein had set out to cure the anarchy which it had created by setting up an organised system of justice. Sinn Fein courts were early in operation:

¹ 'The candidates for the chairmanship of the Granard Rural District Council are requested to attend the Executive meeting and sign the Sinn Fein pledge' (*Nationality*, 4 Aug. 1917).

² These, of course, are not the symbols of royal, but of civic, authority.

³ These 'barracks' were usually cottages, privately owned, which had been leased to the Government. Their destruction imposed a heavy burden on the ratepayers of the county—including the owners—upon whom fell the obligation of compensating for damage due to civil disturbance.

on 12 May, at Kilfinane in Limerick, two Sinn Feiners were put on trial before such a court for cattle driving. Such irregularities were no longer to be permitted, and on the 19th, at Ballinrobe, the first public court established in Ireland under the aegis of Dail Eireann was opened to determine land disputes and effect settlements of agrarian trouble. By the third of the next month Sinn Fein courts had been established in twenty-one Irish counties,¹ and a fortnight later it was reported that a Sinn Fein supreme court was to be established in Dublin. Before the end of the summer, in two-thirds of Ireland, Sinn Fein justice was alone available; the King's writ had ceased to run; the royal judges still went on circuit, but their courts—guarded by police and soldiers—were empty of litigants, who—often unwillingly enough—had to transfer their suits to the improvised tribunals of the 'Republic.' These tribunals might or might not be honest and effective. They usually consisted of a Roman Catholic curate and one or two prominent local Sinn Feiners, and sometimes a lawyer's clerk, or others with a rudimentary knowledge of the procedure of the courts, took part in their decisions, which were often reported as reasonable. Substantial court fees were exacted from the litigants, which went to supply a fund for salaries for the members of the court. In course of time people of all political opinions found it expedient to apply to these courts, if they were to have any redress; solicitors, deprived of practice in the ordinary courts, made no scruple of appearing before them, and even loyalists compelled to sell their property occasionally weakened when they found that the Sinn Fein land courts imposed a higher price for land compulsorily purchased than that allowed by the Land Commission. And, so long as it lasted, the authority of these courts was absolute, and for a sufficient reason—the ultimate penalty for disobedience was death.

The existence of these courts was, of course, a criminal offence under the ordinary law of sedition; but in Ireland, after the proclamation of Sinn Fein under the Crimes Act as a dangerous association, they came within the prohibitions of the Crimes Act of 1887, and every person

¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 4 June, 1920.

taking part in them was liable, after conviction before a court of two resident magistrates, to a sentence of six months' imprisonment. But the difficulty of the Government in dealing with them lay in the fact that evidence was almost impossible to procure as to their personnel or the proceedings that took place before them. It was, in short, not until the ordinary law was superseded by military administration that the Sinn Fein courts were dissolved, not by the ordinary processes of law, but by force. Once scattered, under the influence of the counter-terror, they ceased to appeal even to the sentiment of the people, who on the whole had reason to fear the incidence of a justice almost wholly irresponsible and arbitrary in its methods.¹ In the spring of 1921 the King's writ was once more running in the 'disturbed' counties, the courts were sitting, juries were attending, and litigants were appearing to press their suits.

¹ After the establishment of the Irish Free State the Dail formally recognised the status of these courts as equal to that of the royal courts. It was, however, admitted that many of them had exceeded their powers—notably in the matter of seizing and redistributing land—and a Commission was set up to inquire how far their decisions could be allowed to stand.

CHAPTER X

THE COUNTER-TERROR

Sir Hamar Greenwood and the Constabulary—Effects of the boycott and murders—Heroism of the Police—Battle of Kilmallock—General increase of crime—Reorganisation of the Irish Government—General Macready Commander-in-chief—The ‘Black-and-Tans’ and the Auxiliary Police—The Restoration of Order (Ireland) Act—Outrages and reprisals—The Government and reprisals—The Government of Ireland Act, 1920—Viscount FitzAlan Lord-Lieutenant—Statement by Mr. Lloyd George on reprisals.

THE restoration of the authority of the Crown, and the renewed regular working of the courts of law in districts where for months past the power of the ‘Republic’ had been all but unchallenged, were due to the more consistently vigorous policy introduced by Sir Hamar Greenwood, who succeeded Mr. Ian Macpherson as Chief Secretary on the 4th of April 1920. Though a Liberal and a Home Ruler, he soon saw that the distempers of Ireland had passed beyond hope of cure by any remedies that British Liberalism was prepared to apply, and that for the Government the choice lay between yielding to force and frankly opposing force to force. The first need was to restore the *moral* of the forces of the Crown. The men of the Royal Irish Constabulary had for more than a year borne with amazing patience and courage the campaign of outrage directed against them, and during the earlier months of 1920 there was little sign that their spirit and discipline were failing. The Sinn Feiners never dared attack them except in overwhelming numbers, and even then they did so often without success. Instances of the heroic temper of the men whom the British Government and people later abandoned and betrayed might be multiplied, but one must suffice; and even now the story must be told without mentioning the names of its heroes, since those of them who are not dead are scattered in English provincial towns, where the only protection

that the Government can give them is the hope that they may 'lose their identity.'¹

The R.I.C. 'barrack' at Kilmallock, in County Limerick, was of the usual type—a small private house indistinguishable from the others which surrounded it. Since the troubles began it had been roughly strengthened for purposes of defence, and in May 1920 it was occupied by a garrison of nine constables under a sergeant. On the night of the 28th this fortress was attacked by a body of 300 or 400 Sinn Feiners, who occupied the surrounding cottages and gardens, and from this cover poured upon it a rain of bullets, bombs and incendiary materials. The assault began at 2 A.M. and lasted till 7.45, the police replying vigorously and refusing repeated summonses to surrender. It was not until the barrack was in flames that the garrison decided to evacuate it, though not to surrender. The roof fell in before they could get clear, and the sergeant and a constable were buried under the ruins. The survivors, though wounded and suffering from burns, then charged the besiegers with fixed bayonets and put the whole rabble to flight, with the loss of one constable seriously wounded. The number of casualties among the attackers was never known, but it was rumoured that that night thirty-three were 'carried away in sheets.' Of the surviving constables one was murdered after the signing of the 'Treaty.'

It was one thing, however, to put up a stout defence when attacked in force, but quite another to resist the demoralising effect of social boycott and the never ceasing peril of stealthy assassination; and it is not surprising that, with the intensification of the campaign against them towards the middle of the year, the patience and discipline of the Constabulary began to break down. Time after time they had seen the men they had arrested, for serious crimes against the State, released after a few days of easy imprisonment. Again and again they had been 'let down' owing to a clamour in Parliament and the press which threatened to become inconvenient to Ministers. They were murdered wholesale, and none of their neighbours dared to help them in their death agonies,

¹ This was the answer given by an official of the Irish Office to the writer, who asked him what was being done for the disbanded R.I.C. men.

still less to give evidence against their assassins, not one of whom was punished. Nor did they receive from the Government the material support which they had a right to expect. In vain their commanders pointed out the need for armoured cars, lorries, ordinary motor cars. Nothing was done; and the police, powerless for want of transport, were 'shut up in their barracks, watching nightly for attacks, murdered if they go out singly, ambushed if they go in parties, liable to be shot in the back at any time by an innocent civilian, unable to get exercise or recreation except at the risk of their lives.'¹ For armed and organised men to endure this for ever was not in human nature, and least of all in Irish human nature.

The Royal Irish Constabulary, indeed, was by this time but a remnant of a once magnificent force. The policy of boycott and murder had largely succeeded in its objects; the men were resigning under threats of murder or other outrages on their parents,² and any young man who was announced as about to join the force was

¹ From the Report, dated 31 August, of a Divisional Commissioner R.I.C. On 31 July the same Commissioner reported that the I.R.A. were now stronger and better organised and, by cutting communications, would force the Police to concentrate still further. It was becoming a military, not a police job. 'He is conducting warlike operations against us and we are not permitted to do so against him. He also enjoys the usual advantages of guerilla warfare without suffering any of the penalties attached to it. We have to act largely on the defensive, for we have no one to take the offensive against. As far as we possibly can we take the offensive, but our blows fall on empty air, as the enemy forces at once take up the role of innocent peasants whom we must not touch.'

He points out the necessity for increasing the speed and ease of bringing offenders to justice: 'the trouble and difficulty of moving prisoners and witnesses round the country is intolerable,' and 'the constant references to Dublin and the delays occasioned thereby make intolerable difficulties.' He urges that trials should be held in the Division itself, which was the course afterwards adopted by the Free State Government in dealing with the Irregulars.

² This is a very ancient manifestation of the spirit of vendetta in Ireland, and is doubtless a survival of the tribal instinct. In his speech at the Clonmel Assizes in 1828 Richard Lalor Sheil, one of the leaders in the agitation for Catholic Emancipation, thus comments on it: 'It must be owned that there is a dreadful policy in this system. The Government may withdraw their witnesses from the country and afford them protection; but their wives, their offspring, their parents, their brothers, sisters, nay, their remotest relatives, cannot be secure, and the vengeance of the ferocious peasantry, if defrauded of its more immediate and natural object, will satiate itself with some other victim' (Thomas MacNevin, *The Speeches of Richard Lalor Sheil*, Dublin, 1845, p. 62).

promptly shot. At the same time the catalogue of crimes of all descriptions in Ireland was reaching appalling proportions, and it became urgently necessary for the Government to adopt a far stronger policy if the country was to be saved from lapsing into utter anarchy. In March Mr. Ian Macpherson, in answer to a question in the House of Commons, had estimated the numbers of the Irish Republican Army at 200,000, thus outnumbering the forces of the Crown in Ireland by about five to one. In July the troops in Ireland were increased to 60,000, and the supreme command was taken over by Sir Nevil Macready, a general with a long and distinguished record who had acted for two years as Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police. On the 10th the Government issued instructions for the re-organisation of the R.I.C., the depleted ranks of which were to be filled up with English and Irish ex-service men; and at the same time there was created an auxiliary police force consisting of 1500 ex-officers, divided into 15 mobile companies, for the purpose of carrying out special duties wherever they might be required. Since there were not enough of the dark green uniforms of the R.I.C. to supply all the new recruits, these were clothed temporarily in military khaki, with a black hat and arm band to distinguish them as constables—whence the name ‘black-and-tans.’ They must be distinguished from the auxiliary police, whose uniform continued to be khaki with a black glengarry cap, and who were therefore also sometimes known as ‘black-and-tans.’ The whole of this force was placed under the control of Major-General Sir Henry Tudor, who was established in the Castle as Police Adviser. The hands of the Government in Ireland were further strengthened by the new powers given to courts martial under the Restoration of Order (Ireland) Act, which received the royal assent on the 9th of August, the provisions of which were justified by the Lord Chancellor (Lord Birkenhead) on the ground that civil justice in Ireland had completely broken down owing to the intimidation of juries and magistrates.

That this sorry condition of things was soon altered was due to the presence of the new police force. The military, who after the great disbandment had consisted for a while

mainly of raw boys hardly able to bear the weight of their rifles, had been no match for the strapping guerilla warriors of Sinn Fein. The 'black-and-tans' and the auxiliary cadets (it is well to distinguish them) were men hardened by years of service at the front and brave to recklessness, as they needed to be. Systematically distributed over the disturbed areas of the country, they proceeded to break up the Sinn Fein organisation; soon its leaders were 'on the run'; and the authority of the Crown was gradually re-established in wide districts where for months the *de facto* government had been that of the 'Republic.' In the performance of this difficult and very dangerous task serious irregularities were sometimes committed, but on the whole the 'black-and-tans' were not unpopular; for they broke the Sinn Fein terror and—as the women put it—saved the boys from being forced into the murder gangs.¹ Soon, however, the wildest reports began to circulate about the outrages committed by them, reports grossly exaggerated for propaganda purposes, but none the less having a basis in fact. There is, indeed, no evidence whatever to support the accusations of outrages on women, or indeed of any gross crimes committed on innocent people, and these may be characterised as absolute lies. But there is evidence that some of these men—by no means all—brought to Ireland the loose views as to the rights of property which had been current during the war at the front, and helped themselves to what they needed without in these requisitions always discriminating between the loyal and the disloyal.²

More serious were the issues raised by the reprisals carried out by the force, or rather by some of its members, when any of them were murdered. In matters of this sort it is not the function of the historian to approve or to condemn, but to explain; and in this case the explanation is not far to seek. The general attitude of the 'black-and-tans' is explicable by the abnormal conditions under which they worked. They found themselves in a

¹ From private information. Reports about this, as about most matters in Ireland, are very contradictory.

² As regards the charges of looting, too, it must be remembered that armed men could hardly be expected to bear tamely the refusal of tradesmen and others to serve them. They replied to the boycott by taking what they needed. Sometimes they paid for it, sometimes they did not.

country nominally and even apparently at peace, for its normal life continued through all the troubles, and among a people polite and outwardly even demonstratively friendly. They soon discovered that this was all illusion; that the country was a prey to civil strife in its most cruel and barbarous form; and that the seeming urbanity of the people was too often a treacherous mask. It is not surprising if, not knowing the people as the old R.I.C. men had intimately known them, they were often unable to distinguish realities from appearances, and confounded the veiled Sinn Féin with the real Sinn Féin, and the Loyalists with both. As for reprisals, they are best explained by instances.

The first serious act of reprisal took place at Balbriggan, County Dublin, on 21 September 1920, when District Inspector Burke, an exceedingly popular officer, and another constable were shot dead in the bar of a public house. The murderers used expanding bullets, and when the disfigured corpses of the two constables were carried into the police barracks the men 'saw red,' and that night the houses and shops of the Sinn Féin leaders in the town went up in flames. Similar scenes followed the ambushing and murder of six constables at Rinneen, County Clare, on the 29th. The infuriated police descended upon the neighbouring towns of Miltown-Malbey, Lahinch and Ennistymon, set fire to certain houses and shot two men.¹ Continued murders of police led, at the end of October, to a renewal of these reprisals, armed men invading and causing destruction in the towns of Granard, Ballymote, Tipperary, Athlone, Killorglin, Miltown-Malbey, Longford, and Templemore.² At Tralee it was found that the local patriots had thrown two constables alive into the furnace of the gas works, which led to the town being submitted for a fortnight to a drastic discipline by the comrades of the murdered men. At Tubercurry, on the 2nd of October, the discovery of five constables lying on the high road with their brains battered out led to similar reprisals. In vain the officers tried to restrain the enraged men; they turned savagely upon them and threatened to shoot

¹ The fires were put out by the military, assisted by some of the police.

² *Irish Times* (weekly edition), 6 and 13 November 1920.

them if they interfered.¹ The ambushing of a party of auxiliary police at Dillon's Cross, Cork, on the 11th of December, was followed by incendiary fires in Cork city, in the course of which the City Hall and the Carnegie library were destroyed, but there is no information as to who was responsible, though public opinion fixed responsibility upon the police. But though in these and other cases the discipline of the police gave way, the cases were far more numerous in which it stood the awful test. No reprisals followed the treacherous massacre of the young officers in Dublin on 'Red Sunday.' No reprisals followed the horrible affair of Macroom, in County Cork, on the 29th of November, when seventeen auxiliary cadets were lured into an ambush of a hundred Sinn Feiners disguised as British soldiers, and sixteen of them were killed, no quarter being given and the dead savagely mutilated with axes.²

The irregular reprisals, moreover, were not all the work of the police, and the widespread belief, assiduously fostered by the Sinn Fein propaganda, that they were begun by the 'black-and-tans' and at the instigation of the authorities, had no foundation in fact. It suited the 'Republic' to concentrate the venom of their attacks on the auxiliary police because, when once this force had been freed from certain undesirable elements which had brought some discredit upon it at the outset, it was recognised as being the most magnificent fighting force that had ever taken the field in Ireland and therefore as the greatest danger that the rebels had yet had to face.³

¹ Private information.

² It was at first reported that Macroom had been burned, but this was contradicted next day. One fire broke out, but was soon extinguished with the aid of the soldiers and auxiliary police. It was within two or three hundred yards of this spot that, in 1922, General Michael Collins, then in command of the Free State Army, was ambushed by Irregulars and killed.

³ Splendid courage and discipline were shown. for instance, by a small party of auxiliaries caught in an ambush on the Ballyvourney road, eleven miles from Macroom, at the end of April 1921. A stirring account of this fight appeared in the *Southern Star (Realt a' de'scirt)*, Skibbereen, of 5 March 1921. Owing to the heroism of the officer commanding the auxiliaries—who, though mortally wounded at the first onset, continued to give the necessary orders—the fight ended in the discomfiture of the Republicans. It is to their credit that they should have published in a journal of Sinn Fein sympathies an account of this affair in which unstinted admiration is shown for the courage and discipline of the 'enemy.'

The serious reprisals during September and October were the work of the old R.I.C., and very many, there is good authority for saying, were the work of soldiers, who naturally wearied of being continually exposed to assassination, as well as to all the terrors of the criminal law, if they dared to use their weapons in self-defence. Sometimes, too, the civil population took the law into their own hands. When Inspector Swanzy, R.I.C., was murdered at Lisburn, on the 8th of August 1920, the Protestants, who were in a great majority in the town, doubly enraged by this outrage in evangelical Ulster, rose and burned many Catholic houses, in spite of all the efforts of the local clergy to stop them. The murder of a policeman in Belfast was followed, on the 25th of September, by attacks of Orangemen on Sinn Feiners, and a renewal of the sectarian riots which since July had from time to time set the city in a turmoil, and now again necessitated its occupation by the military. The bitterness in these cases was increased by the news from the south, where during 1920 the partisan war assumed more and more of a 'religious' character, many outrages on Protestant churches being reported and, later, murders of Protestant farmers.

The temper of the Constabulary placed the Government in a difficult position. To approve of irregular reprisals was impossible, to condone them was dangerous and worse. Yet to take stern and drastic measures against them was equally impossible in view of the general feeling among the troops and police, for this might easily have led, either to their resignation *en masse*—which was what Sinn Fein was aiming at—or to their getting utterly out of hand and sweeping with fire and sword through the country. Above all, to have shown the slightest sign of a disposition to 'let the police down' again, would have been almost certainly disastrous. It is not the present writer's intention either to attack or to defend the apparently equivocal attitude at first assumed by the Government towards this question of reprisals, which was bitterly criticised, but merely to state the conditions by which it was determined. It is certainly true to say that Sir Hamar Greenwood, by his consistent championship of the forces of the Crown against their

critics and detractors, succeeded in winning their confidence and thus in recreating the essential conditions for the restoration of effective discipline. One lesson, moreover, the irregular reprisals had taught the Government, namely, that fear will open the lips that fear has sealed. The very night of the Balbriggan reprisal, for the first time, men came to the police to denounce the murderers, moved by fear that their own houses might be burned.¹

In view of the refusal of people to come forward except under pressure of this kind, the Government decided to make certain areas collectively responsible for the murder of soldiers and police. Where ambushes were elaborately prepared for days beforehand, telegraph wires being cut, and the roads for miles round being made impassable by trenches of felled trees, it was assumed that these attacks must have been delivered if not with the connivance, at least with the acquiescence, of the people. While, then, irregular reprisals were to be sternly repressed and punished, it was decided to take drastic measures to bring home to the people the fact that 'an attitude of neutrality is inconsistent with loyalty' and to arm the military with the powers necessary for this purpose. On the 20th of December, accordingly, the Lord-Lieutenant issued a proclamation placing the counties of Cork, Tipperary, Kerry, and Limerick, together with the cities of Cork and Limerick, under martial law, and this was further extended by a proclamation of the 4th of January 1921 to the counties of Clare, Kilkenny, Waterford, and Wexford. General Macready at once proclaimed that 'a state of

¹ A Divisional Commissioner reported on 31 October as follows: 'Sinn Fein continues its policy of brutal reprisals; all who disagree or act against it are marked out for intimidation by murder, arson, assaults, or threatenings. The forces of the Crown on the spot, in touch with the situation, and well aware that reprisals can only be met, in this country of cowards, by reprisals, started operations on their own. The effect was instantaneous. Waverers came over to the constitutional side, information began to come in, congratulatory letters were received. Sinn Fein, seeing the danger to them, started propaganda hard, and supported by a servile press and ignorant fools in all parts, raised an outcry against such brutalities on the part of the Crown forces. Sinn Fein have gained that end, and now they once more continue their brutalities, murders and reprisals, undeterred and largely uncondemned. What are the Crown forces to do? Walk about the country until they are murdered?'

'Some of the police are frightened,' he reports on 30 September, 'but very few, most are simply boiling with rage.'

armed insurrection' existed, and declared the forces of the Crown in Ireland to be on active service. 'Great Britain,' he added, 'has no quarrel with Irishmen; her sole quarrel is with crime, outrage, and disorder; her sole object in declaring Martial Law is to restore peace to a distracted and unhappy country; her sole enemies are those who have countenanced, inspired and participated in rebellion, murder, and outrage.' He went on to define the obligations of the people in general and the punishments to be imposed for failure to meet these obligations. All arms and ammunition were to be surrendered to the authorities at once, and any unauthorised person found in the possession of arms after the 27th of December was to be punishable with death. Any unauthorised person wearing the uniform or equipment proper to His Majesty's forces, or any similar clothing likely to deceive, was to be liable to the death penalty, while the possession of such uniforms or equipment was to be punishable with penal servitude. Death was to be the penalty for taking part in the insurrection or for harbouring and assisting those taking part.¹ A further proclamation of the Commander-in-Chief announced that, in the event of an ambush attack on the military or police, the houses in the immediate neighbourhood of such ambush would be destroyed, not by way of retaliation, but as a punishment for the failure of the people to give information to the authorities, as by law they were bound to do. In Cork, Major-General Strickland issued a proclamation in which he pointed out that those who assisted the rebels in any way, or who failed to give notice of their movements, would render themselves liable to the penalties of Martial Law, and further stated that persons, whether in authority or not, who permitted, or did not do their utmost to

¹ Of this *The Nation* (8 Jan. 1921), which throughout did its best to hamper the authorities, says: 'Another proclamation threatens with the death of Miss Cavell a mother who harbors her Sinn Fein son.' This is characteristic nonsense. The authorities knew perfectly well the kind of people at whom the proclamation was aimed, and the mothers of Sinn Fein sons were never for a moment in any danger, far less so than the mothers of the soldiers and police, for whom, of course, the *Nation* expressed no sympathy. The courts martial, composed of young officers (often lawyers disguised in khaki) erred if anything—from the strictly militarist point of view—on the side of leniency, and the number of death penalties imposed was very few. Still fewer were carried out.

prevent damage to Government property, would be severely punished both in person and property.

Such was the origin of what were known as 'official reprisals.' Recourse was had to them sparingly, and only in aggravated cases. The first conspicuous instance, which is typical, may serve to illustrate all the rest. On the 5th of January it was announced from Dublin Castle that a murderous attack on the police had taken place at Midleton in County Cork, as the result of which two had been killed and seven wounded. According to accounts subsequently published, the town had for some time seemed so peaceful that, about a month before the outrage, the military had been withdrawn and the task of keeping order handed over to the police. Between 9 and 10 P.M. on the night of the same day a patrol of ten policemen were going along the main street, under the command of Sergeant Moloney, when a volley of rifle fire was suddenly poured into them from the other side of the street, which was dimly lighted. Though greatly outnumbered, the constables put up a stiff fight, and in the end their assailants cleared off. During the fight the constables at the barracks succeeded in communicating with the force at Cork, by Verey lights and other means. Relief parties of military and police were at once sent off, and some time between eleven and twelve o'clock the first lorry full of police arrived at a place called Ballyrichard, within a mile of the town. Here they were ambushed. They ran into a tree which had been felled across the road, and when they pulled up they were received with a volley of rifle and revolver fire. The lights of the lorry were at once switched off, its occupants sought cover and opened fire on the attackers, and after a few minutes these made off. All the circumstances pointed to the fact that this affair had been long and carefully planned, and that it could not have happened without the collusion of the people, whatever the motives for such collusion may have been. It was therefore decided that it was a case for 'reprisals.' The town was occupied by the military, and all the male inhabitants were rounded up and kept under guard while the houses from which, or from near which, the ambushers had fired were blown up.

This policy was, of course, justified by all the laws of

war, and it was defended even in moderate quarters on the ground that, since reprisals of some sort were the only means for dealing with the situation, it was better that they should be subjected to some rule than that they should be carried out irregularly and without responsible supervision. There can be no doubt, however, that it placed those who had little or no sympathy with the rebels in a terrible position. People living in isolated country houses might or might not know of rebel ambushes preparing in their neighbourhood. If they knew, to give information to the authorities meant almost certain death, while ignorance or silence might mean the penal destruction of their homes. It is not, perhaps, to be wondered at that few had the courage of Mrs. Lindsay, an old lady of seventy, who shortly before the Truce saved the lives of many British officers and men by telling the authorities of an ambush prepared near her house, and was duly 'executed' as a 'spy.' The fact of the execution was admitted by Cathal Brugha, the Republican Chief of Staff, in a letter published immediately after the Truce, in which he expressed in correct official language regret for the necessity. The affair caused only a mild sensation in England, where it was generally assumed that this lady had been shot after trial by 'court martial,' a proceeding which apparently did not greatly shock the conscience even of those who had been loudest in their outcry over the fate of Nurse Cavell, and was even condoned by some of the more infamous organs of the Radical Press. The true story is very different. Mrs. Lindsay was betrayed by the very man who had originally given her the information and had asked her to report it, on the ground that his own position debarred him from doing so, but was afterwards seized by panic fear that his share in the affair might become known. She was seized at night by a band of armed men, dragged on foot twenty miles up into the mountains, and there handed over to the tender mercies of the women, who tore her to pieces. Her act of heroic self-sacrifice, ignored by the English people, is at least remembered in the regiment whose soldiers she saved, and every year its officers celebrate her memory.

Historically this act of savage retaliation is interesting

mainly as an illustration of the essential weakness of the official policy of reprisals. In cruelty, well or ill applied, the British are no match for the native Irish; and in a competition in ruthlessness there could from the first be no question as to which side would win. The stern measures adopted by the Government were more than counterbalanced by retaliatory policy of Sinn Fein. If houses in the neighbourhood of an ambush were burned on presumption of at least the tacit connivance of the tenants, the Irish Republican Army at once retaliated by burning down the finest country house they chanced upon, on no presumption at all save that of the religion or the political sympathies of the owner. Thus began that ruinous competition in destruction which, continued by the irreconcilable Republican faction after the 'peace,' carried a trail of fire throughout the length and breadth of Ireland and left it, in the despairing words of the Roman Catholic bishops, 'wrecked from end to end.' There are circumstances in which the policy of cruelty well applied may be the best and the most merciful. There are no circumstances in which 'half-measures,' vacillating hopelessly between cruelty and kindness, can be anything but disastrous.

Such was the condition of things in Ireland—frankly recognised as 'a state of war'—when, on 23 December 1920, the new Government of Ireland Bill became law. It had few friends, even in Parliament; it had been debated in empty houses; it received no welcome outside, except in Ulster, where it was welcomed as an ark of salvation from worse things. It gave, it is true, greater powers to the Irish legislatures than those given by the Act of 1914; it provided machinery for safeguarding the essential unity of Ireland in spite of 'partition,' and for securing corporate unity whenever the dis severed halves of the Irish people should arrive at an understanding. But the machinery for conciliation is useless without the driving force of the spirit of conciliation, and to the mass of the Irish people, who do not know the meaning of the word compromise, it seemed but a cumbrous device for burdening their shoulders with a responsibility which was not theirs. In the North preparations at once began to put the Act in force whenever 'the appointed day' should be named, Sir James Craig for this purpose taking

over the Ulster leadership from Sir Edward Carson. In the South nobody believed that the day ever would be named, at least so far as Ireland outside Ulster was concerned; for it was thought improbable that sane men would try inflammatory constitutional experiments in a political powder magazine. In this, however, the South was mistaken; for in April the Government fixed the appointed day, and on the 21st instructions were sent to Dublin to make all the preparations necessary for holding the elections. At the same time it was announced that the lord-lieutenancy had been accepted by Lord Edmund Talbot, a brother of the late and uncle of the actual Duke of Norfolk, who was raised to the peerage as Viscount FitzAlan of Derwent. As a Catholic he had become eligible for the office, which had hitherto been confined to Protestants, owing to the removal of the last remnant of Catholic disabilities by the Act. His acceptance of the thankless and dangerous dignity was an act of fine self-abnegation; but it was widely felt that this act would be in vain, for the time was past when the discontents of Ireland might have been allayed by a frank appeal to her Catholic sentiment. The forces which were gaining the upper hand had little enough to do with the essential spirit of Catholicism, and were presently to set it at open defiance.

While thus seeking to advertise its good will towards Ireland, the Government showed as yet no signs of any intention to relax its efforts to restore order in the country, as the essential preliminary to any satisfactory settlement. It was hampered, indeed, by the outcry raised in England by well-meaning people whose ignorance of the conditions of the problem to be solved was only equalled by their belief in their own capacity to solve it, usually by the application of certain 'principles' which experience had proved to work reasonably well in law-abiding England. Mr. Lloyd George had all the appearance of being unmoved by these clamours. At Carnarvon, in the autumn of 1920, he had declared roundly that no self-respecting Government could make peace with the 'murder gang' in Ireland. On the 19th of April 1921 he justified the stern measures taken by his Government in a letter to Dr. Watts-Ditchfield, Bishop of Chelmsford, who, with nineteen other English Protestant prelates and ministers, had

addressed to him a strong remonstrance against 'the whole reprisals policy' and a plea for negotiations with a view to a 'truce.' The Prime Minister wrote :

'That there have been deplorable excesses I will not attempt to deny. Individuals working under conditions of extraordinary personal danger and strain, where they are in uniform and their adversaries mingle unrecognisable among the ordinary civilian population, have undoubtedly been guilty of unjustifiable acts. A certain number of undesirables have got into the corps, and in the earlier days discipline in the novel and exacting conditions took some time to establish. . . .

'There is no question that, despite all difficulties, discipline is improving, the force is consolidating, and that the acts of indiscipline, despite ambushes, assassinations and outrages, often designed to provoke retaliation for the purposes of propaganda, are becoming increasingly infrequent. I venture to believe that when the history of the past nine months in Ireland comes to be written, and the authentic acts of misconduct can be disentangled from the vastly greater mass of reckless and lying accusations, the general record of patience and forbearance displayed by the sorely tried police, by the Auxiliaries as well as by the ordinary Constabulary, will command not the condemnation but the admiration of posterity.'

The deplorable condition of Ireland Mr. Lloyd George ascribed mainly to the intransigence of Sinn Fein :

'I do not wish to minimise in the least Great Britain's share of responsibility for the present state of the Irish question. But at long last all parties in Great Britain had united, in the General Election of 1918, in asking and securing from the electorate a mandate to give to Ireland the Home Rule which had been pleaded for by Gladstone and asked for by all the leaders of Irish Nationalism since Isaac Butt, including Parnell, Dillon, and Redmond. The only unsettled question was the treatment of Ulster, and as to that, both the Liberal Party had recognised in 1914, and the Irish Nationalists in 1916, that if there was to be a peaceful settlement Ulster must have separate treatment.

'Sinn Fein rejected Home Rule and demanded in its place an Irish Republic for the whole of Ireland. Sinn Fein went further. It deliberately set to work to destroy

conciliation and constitutional methods, because it recognised that violence was the only method by which it could realise a Republic. The rebellion of 1916 was its first blow to conciliation and reason. Its refusal to take part in the Convention was the second. Its proclamation of a Republic by the Dail Eireann and abstention from Westminster was the third. Its inauguration of the policy of murder and assassination in order to defeat Home Rule, rather than to discuss the Home Rule Bill in Parliament or enter upon direct conference outside was the fourth.

‘I do not think that anybody can doubt that the principal reason why the war did not bring a peaceful settlement, and why Ireland is more deeply divided to-day than it has ever been, has been the determination of Sinn Fein to prevent such a settlement and to fight for a Republic instead. . . .

‘But there is another aspect of the question to which I must allude. Sinn Fein does not confine its activities to attacks on servants of the Crown. It has inaugurated a reign of terror in Ireland which is certainly equal to anything in Irish history. Its hold on the country is due partly, no doubt, to the fanatical enthusiasm it invokes, but partly it is due to terrorism of the most extreme kind. Its opponents in Ireland are murdered ruthlessly, usually without any form of trial, with no chance of pleading their case, simply because the Sinn Fein leaders think them better out of the way. . . .

‘The case of Sir Arthur Vicars¹ has excited horror because it is the murder of a well-known man. But it is only typical of what is going on all over the country. I may mention two other instances.

‘In the first, William P. Kennedy, a Nationalist Irishman of the school of Dillon, refused to close his premises at Borris, County Carlow, on the occasion of the death of Lord Mayor McSwiney of Cork.² He was

¹ Formerly Ulster King-at-Arms and head of the Irish Heralds’ College. He was dragged from his house by a roving band of armed men on the night of 14 April 1921, and riddled with bullets, his house being burned.

² He died, as the result of a hunger-strike of sixty-three days, on 25 Oct. 1920 in Brixton prison. This ended the policy of hunger-strikes. It was revived by the ‘Irregulars’ imprisoned by the Free State Government in 1922–1923. On 3 May 1923 the Dail decided that in the case of the Republican hunger-strikers the precedent set by the British Government was to be followed.

boycotted, and thereupon took an action for damages against a number of his enemies, Michael O'Dempsey being his solicitor. A short while after both Kennedy and O'Dempsey were shot from behind a wall in front of Kennedy's house.

'In the second case, William Good, an ex-captain in the Army, who had resumed his studies at Trinity College, Dublin, after being demobilised, returned home to attend the funeral of his father who had been murdered at his own door a few days before. He drove in to Bandon on marketing business. On his return he was waylaid by armed and masked men, carried some way and done to death, the following notice being found: "Tried, convicted and executed; spies and informers beware."

'The last two cases seem even worse. The first was the atrocious case recorded in the newspapers of April 8, where an unarmed, defenceless, and war-crippled ex-soldier was murdered with revolting brutality in the presence of his mother and sister, who were spattered with his blood. The second is in the papers this morning, where a poor woman named Kitty Carroll, the sole support of her aged father and mother and invalid brother, was dragged from her house by a party of masked men, who murdered her and attached to her body the legend: "Spies and informers, beware! Tried, convicted and executed by I.R.A." ¹

'I cite these cases because I think it is essential that people should realise the character of the Sinn Fein policy, the principles upon which it acts, and the nature of its campaign. Sinn Fein has never issued any condemnation of murder. Assassination and outrage are the weapons which it has deliberately chosen as the means by which it is to gain its ends. I should like to repeat that it was not until over a hundred of their comrades had been cruelly assassinated that the police began to strike a blow in self-defence. . . . The present state of affairs is due to one cause, and one cause only—that there is still an irreconcilable difference between the two sides. The one side—or, rather, the group which controls it—stands for an

¹ She had rashly given information, *through the post*, to the police of the existence of a still for the illicit distilling of whisky. This came out after the date of the Prime Minister's letter.

independent Irish Republic; the other stands for maintenance in fundamentals of the Union, together with the completest self-government for Ireland within the Empire which is compatible with conceding to Ulster the same right of self-determination within Ireland as Nationalist Ireland has claimed within the Union. . . .

‘A truce in itself will not bridge the gulf, though it might be useful if there were any doubt on either side as to where the other stands, or a basis for discussion were in sight. What really matters if we are to attain to peace is that a basis for a permanent settlement should be reached.

‘I fully admit, and I have always admitted, that the declared policy of Sinn Fein and the policy of His Majesty’s Government are irreconcilable. I believe that the policy of establishing an Irish Republic is impossible for two reasons: first, because it is incompatible with the security of Great Britain and with the existence of the British commonwealth; and second, because if it were conceded it would mean civil war in Ireland—for Ulster would certainly resist incorporation in an Irish Republic by force—and in this war hundreds of thousands of people, not only from Great Britain but from all over the world, would hasten to take part.

‘On the other hand, I believe that the policy of the Government—the maintenance in fundamentals of the unity of the Kingdom, coupled with the immediate establishment of two Parliaments in Ireland with full powers to unite on any terms upon which they can agree upon themselves—is not only the sole practical solution, but one which is both just and wise in itself. I further believe that the present Home Rule Act is a sensible and workmanlike method of carrying this policy into effect. . . .

‘But the present struggle is not about the Home Rule Act at all. Fundamentally the issue is the same as that in the war of North and South in the United States—it is an issue between secession and union.

‘At the outbreak of the great American struggle nearly everybody in these islands sympathised with the South and was against the North. Even Gladstone took this view. Only John Bright never wavered in his adherence to Lincoln’s cause. That war lasted four years. It cost a

million lives and much devastation and ruin. There was more destruction of property in a single Confederate county than in all the so-called "reprisals" throughout the whole of Ireland.

'Lincoln always rejected alike truce and compromise. As he often said, he was fighting for the Union and meant to save it even if he could only do so at the price of retaining slavery in the South. . . .

'Is not our policy exactly the same? It is by reason of the contiguity of the two islands and their strategic and economic interdependence to fight secession and to maintain the fundamental unity of our ancient kingdom of many nations from Flamborough Head to Cape Clear, and from Cape Wrath to Land's End. I believe that our ideal of combining unity with Home Rule is a finer and a nobler ideal than that excessive nationalism which will take nothing less than isolation, which is Sinn Fein's creed to-day, and which if it had full play would Balkanise the world. . . .

'I do not see, therefore, how we can pursue a different line of policy. It has never been our policy to refuse compromise about anything but Union itself and the non-coercion of Ulster. Throughout the whole of last year when the Home Rule Bill was before Parliament, I invited negotiations with the elected representatives of Ireland, stating that the only points I could not discuss were the secession of Ireland and the forcing of Ulster into an Irish Parliament against its will. . . .

'To these overtures there was never a reply. And there has never been a reply, for the good reason that the real Sinn Fein organisation is not yet ready to abandon its ideal of an independent Irish Republic, including Ulster. That there are many Sinn Feiners who recognise the folly and impossibility of this attitude is certain. But I regret that it is no less certain that up to the present the directing minds of the Sinn Fein movement, who control the Irish Republican Army—the real obstacle of peace—believe that they can ultimately win a Republic by continuing to fight as they fight to-day, and are resolutely opposed to compromise. . . .

'So long as the leaders of Sinn Fein stand in this position, and receive the support of their countrymen,

settlement is, in my judgment, impossible. The Government of which I am the head will never give way upon the fundamental question of secession. Nor do I believe that any alternative Government could do so either.

‘So long, therefore, as Sinn Fein Ireland demands a Republic and refuses to accept loyally membership of the British Commonwealth, coupled with the fullest Home Rule which is compatible with conceding to Ulster the same rights as it claims for itself, the present evils will continue.’

CHAPTER XI

THE SURRENDER

The last of the Viceroy—Continuance of the 'war'—Equivocal attitude of Mr. Lloyd George—Sinn Fein declares war on Ulster—Abortive interviews between Sir James Craig and De Valera—General election of 1918—The Sinn Fein position strengthened—'War' carried into England—Burning of the Customs House—Intensification of the fighting—Opening of the Northern Parliament—Lord Birkenhead on the situation—The King in Belfast—Reply of Sinn Fein to the King's message—The Prime Minister invites the Irish leaders to a conference—De Valera accepts—A truce arranged—Negotiations preliminary to a conference—Irreconcilable claims of the North and South—Sir James Craig declines the invitation—The Conference—De Valera's proclamation to the Irish people—His telegram to the Pope—Threatened break-up of the conference—Articles of Agreement signed—Examination of the terms of the Treaty—Attitude of Sinn Fein towards the King—The Ulster boundary question—The British Parliament accepts the Treaty.

ON the 2nd of May 1921 the new Lord-Lieutenant, Viscount FitzAlan of Derwent, took the oath of office in Dublin Castle with all the old-world ceremonial. There had, however, been no state entry into the capital, as in happier days. The King's representative lived entrenched in the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park, and could only venture abroad with infinite precaution. The same was true of the Chief Secretary and his subordinates in the Castle, who administered the country as well as they could from behind barriers of steel plates and barbed wire entanglements. The very seat of government was, in fact, a death-trap, since every entrance to it was watched night and day by gunmen who, when opportunity offered, shot down ruthlessly anyone connected with the staff, however humble, and those whom they suspected of visiting the Castle for 'treasonable' purposes. And from this stronghold issued armoured cars, or Crossley tenders loaded with soldiers or auxiliary police, to scour the city and the countryside.

At this time there was little sign that the Government

was relaxing its efforts to restore order. To minimise the opportunities given by the hours of darkness for murder and other outrages the 'curfew' had been imposed on Dublin, as on other main centres of disturbance. After 10 P.M. no one was allowed abroad except by special permit, and to defy this order was to run a risk which few cared to take. At the appointed hour a sudden and weird silence fell upon the city, broken only from time to time by the ominous rumble of armoured cars and Crossley tenders with searchlights scouring the streets, or by the occasional sound of rifle-fire or exploding bombs. Throughout all this, however, quiet and law-abiding people were never much inconvenienced; the normal life of the city was not seriously interfered with; and to the last the soldiers and police showed a tolerance and a good nature amazing in the circumstances. Sinn Fein propagandists spoke of the 'Terror,' and possibly for them it was terrible; but for the people at large it was mild compared with that which Sinn Fein itself had organised, and which was now rapidly being broken up.

Yet, in spite of the vigour and apparent determination of the Government, it is now clear that influences were at work within the Castle itself by which the effect of its disciplinary measures was to a large extent neutralised. The new Assistant Under-Secretary, Mr. Andrew Cope, an Englishman, had begun his career at the Castle by summarily dismissing certain old and trusted civil servants whose intimate knowledge of criminal activities in Ireland was apparently inconvenient, and is now known to have been carrying on negotiations *sub rosa* with the Sinn Fein leaders.¹ Quite apart from this, however, there is plenty of evidence to show that Mr. Lloyd George, while waving the sword of justice with one hand, never ceased holding out the olive branch with the other. It was soon clear that the Act of 1920, the futility of which, so far as Southern Ireland was concerned, now stood revealed to

¹ 'During the war Collins acted as Intelligence officer on the General Headquarters Staff, and as well conducted many unofficial pourparlers with Cope, the Under Secretary of State for Ireland, as to a possible basis for peace negotiations' (*Workers' Republic*, 11 November 1922; see also Sir Henry Robinson, *Memories, Wise and Otherwise*). Mr. Cope was rewarded for his services by Mr. Lloyd George with a K.C.B., a large sum of money down, and the post of organiser of what remained of the National Liberal Party at a salary of £2000 a year.

all the world, was no longer regarded by him as the ultimate measure of possible concession. On the 24th of March 1921, and again on the 5th of April, he had declared in the House of Commons that the Government was willing to open negotiations when Irish opinion should be prepared for a settlement. On the 22nd of April he had repeated in the same place the essential conditions for such a settlement which he had laid down in his letter to the Bishop of Chelmsford. As yet, however, his public language gave no sign that he contemplated any such surrender as was afterwards made.

There was, indeed, in the attitude of the Irish Republicans, little enough to encourage the pacific advances which at this time an increasing volume of ignorant opinion in England was pressing the Government to make; and, as is always the case, the tentative approaches of the Prime Minister were interpreted by those to whom they were made as signs of weakness. Among the mass of the people in Ireland there was, of course, a longing for peace at almost any cost; and some emotion, of speculation rather than hope, was caused when it became known that on 5 May Sir James Craig, the Ulster leader, had accepted an invitation to a conference with De Valera. Rumour was rife as to the significance of this meeting. After the coming into effect, on 19 April, of the Act of 1920 Sinn Féin had declared war on 'secessionist' Ulster; the campaign of outrage had been extended to the North; and in the South a boycott of goods coming from the Six Counties was said to be spreading consternation among Ulster business men. It was suggested that De Valera had merely invited Sir James Craig in order to impress upon him the ultimate consequences of this policy to Ulster, and to invite him to come to terms with the 'Republic.' The general opinion was, however, that the meeting was the outcome of a genuine wish to find a *modus vivendi*; and this impression was deepened by the manifesto issued by the Ulster leader on the day following. Sir Edward Carson, in resigning the leadership, had declared that the supreme object of the new Government of Northern Ireland ought to be peace. 'Rather than fight these people,' he said, 'try to win them over to us.' So, too, Sir James Craig now put in

the forefront of his programme the 'earnest desire for the peace of Ireland.'

It was at once clear that, whatever the object of this meeting may have been, it had done nothing towards the accommodation of the differences between the North and South, or to bring a general peace nearer. De Valera, as was to be abundantly proved later, was incapable of seeing any point of view save his own;¹ and, even had he been other than what God had made him, it may be doubted whether the outcome would have been different; for there was little enough evidence at this time of a growth of the spirit of compromise among any of the warring factions in Ireland. Sinn Fein had, indeed, decided to take part in the elections for the new parliaments of the South and North, but in doing so had proclaimed its resolve not to recede an inch from its intransigent position. By this politic action it risked nothing, and stood to gain much. In the actual conditions of the country it was clear that, whatever the secret views of the electors might be, no one would dare to stand in opposition to a Sinn Fein candidate; and the unopposed return of a Republican representative by every constituency in the South and West of Ireland, combined with the solid refusal of those returned to attend the new parliament or to take the oath of allegiance, would be the best possible advertisement to the world of the deliberate verdict of the Irish people on the Better Government of Ireland Act.

The result fully justified this decision. When, on 13 May, the nominations were handed in, it was found that in no single constituency was there to be a contested election. In producing this impressive unanimity fear undoubtedly acted; but religious influence also played its part. In the elections of 1918 Cardinal Logue had acted as mediator between the warring claims of Nationalists and Sinn Feiners; in those of 1921 he declared openly for Sinn Fein, and on 22 May, the day before the Ulster elections, there was read in all the Roman Catholic churches a letter which he had received from Pope Benedict XV, in which His Holiness, while urging peace,

¹ In the course of the debate in the Dail on 10 May 1923, Mr. Sean Milroy said, 'I have no doubt Mr. De Valera is the most reasonable man in the world if he gets his way in everything.'

gave discreet encouragement to the Sinn Fein cause by suggesting that the Treaty of Versailles had not given 'sufficient consideration to the desires of the nations.' The result of these various influences was that of the 128 constituencies of the South and West 124 returned Sinn Feiners unopposed. The four members for Dublin University, also returned unopposed, were not Sinn Feiners; but they were nominees of no party and were bound by no pledges save to study the interest of the University and to work for a settlement which should bring peace and unity to Ireland. The elections for the Northern Parliament, which took place on the 23rd, produced results scarcely less unequivocal as an expression of the temper of the Protestant North. The Unionists had only counted on winning thirty-two of the fifty-two seats; they actually won forty. Six Nationalists, including Mr. Joseph Devlin, were returned, and six Sinn Feiners, including Eamon De Valera, Arthur Griffith, and Michael Collins, all in the preponderantly Roman Catholic constituencies. Both Nationalists and Sinn Feiners announced their intention of not taking their seats.

The triumph of Sinn Fein at the elections was followed by an intensification of the 'war,' which was now carried into 'the enemy's country.' During the week-end 14-16 May 1921 large numbers of armed and masked men engaged in shootings and burnings in London, St. Albans and Liverpool, the objects of these attentions being the relatives of members of the R.I.C. In Ireland itself the same week-end witnessed two horrible crimes—the murder of District Inspector Major Biggs and of Miss Barrington, daughter of Sir Charles Barrington, between Glenstal and Newport, and the murder of District Inspector Blake and his heroic young wife, together with two young army officers, as they were returning from a tennis party at Ballyturn House in Galway.¹ On the 25th the Customs House, a lovely example of late eighteenth-century classical architecture and the most beautiful building in Dublin, was entered by a large band of armed men and set on fire; it burned for three days, till only the blackened and crumbling shell remained. This act was ordered by Dail Eireann, which justified its action in the

¹ Full account in *Irish Times*, 17 May.

Irish Bulletin (28 May) on the ridiculous plea that the destruction of this noble monument was necessary in order 'to save the lives of four million people.' Of the attackers more than a hundred were arrested, while many are said to have been trapped in the building and burned to death. Some inconvenience was caused to the Government owing to the destruction of the records of the Local Government Board and the Board of Inland Revenue, but far more to private individuals, since an immense number of deeds and documents were lost.

To this flaming challenge British Ministers replied by repeating once more that they would never yield to violence. On 21 May the Prime Minister told the House of Commons that the Government intended to take more vigorous measures to suppress lawlessness in Ireland, and that for this purpose more troops would have to be sent there; on the following day the Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, declared that 'the Government would go on until the last revolver was picked out of the hand of the last assassin in Ireland.' As an earnest of the sincerity of these protestations a considerable body of fresh troops left for Ireland on the 28th.

Meanwhile Sir James Craig had gone to London, and on the 31st it was announced that further efforts were to be made to secure peace. The omens were not auspicious. In Sinn Féin Ireland the more turbulent elements were entirely out of hand, and the utter insecurity of life and property, together in many cases with the complete interruption of ordinary communications, were quickly strangling the economic life of the country. The organisation of the I.R.A. in the country districts had been largely broken up, and many once disturbed areas were now peaceful; but 'flying columns,' which owed their mobility to 'commandeered' motor-cars and bicycles, scoured the country, ambushing small parties of constabulary—as in Kerry on 2 June—levying 'taxes,' burning country houses, and kidnapping gentlemen, and sometimes ladies, of unpopular views. The cutting of telegraph and telephone poles, and the digging of trenches across roads, were organised on a large scale, men of all classes and opinions being forced at the revolver's point to take part in this work. On the 2nd June telephone posts were cut down

at Liverpool, and on the night of 7-8 June hundreds of wires were cut in places so far apart as Cardiff, Hatfield, and Bexley; the outrages in England culminated on the night of 16 June in a series of attacks on signal boxes and signalmen in the suburbs of London, with the object of wrecking trains, attacks which were renewed at Manchester on the 18th. On the 9th June the Government published as a 'white paper' (Cmd. 1326), under the title of 'Inter-course between Bolshevism and Sinn Fein,' the text of a proposed treaty between the Russian Soviet Government and the Irish Republic which Dr. McCartan, M.P. for King's County, had gone to Moscow to negotiate.

Meanwhile, on the 7th, the Northern Parliament had been opened at Belfast, and the Government constituted. Sir James Craig became Prime Minister; Mr. H. McD. Pollock, Chairman of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, Minister of Finance; Sir R. Dawson Bates, Minister for Home Affairs; Mr. J. M. Andrews, Minister of Labour; the Marquess of Londonderry, Minister of Education; and Mr. E. M. Archdale, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce. The Hon. Hugh O'Neill, son of Lord O'Neill, was elected Speaker. The Parliament was opened by Viscount FitzAlan, the Lord-Lieutenant, whose speech excited particular attention because of its reference to the Government of Ireland Act. 'The Act,' he said, 'is not perfect. It needs amending, and I should not be surprised if it were amended in the near future.'

The significance of this statement was taken to lie in the fact that in parliamentary circles in London the opinion was gaining ground that, before applying 'crown colony' government to the refractory South of Ireland as provided for in the Act, an attempt should be made to win it over by further concessions. On 21 June the Earl of Donoughmore, a large landowner in County Tipperary, moved in the House of Lords that 'the situation in Ireland urgently requires that His Majesty's Government should be prepared to propose and authorise negotiations to be opened on such terms as they think calculated to terminate the present deadlock.' In opposing the motion the Lord Chancellor, speaking presumably on behalf of the Government, denied that anything in Lord FitzAlan's speech implied any intention of the Government to bring

in an Amending Bill, and said that the amendments referred to were only concerned with minor matters. He admitted the gloom of the situation; that there was 'a small war in Ireland'; and that 'our military methods had failed to keep pace with and to overcome the military methods of our opponents.' The establishment of the Northern Parliament had emphasised the fact that there was not one Ireland, but two Irelands. The only hope lay in the representatives of these two Irelands coming together and working out a basis of agreement, and from this point of view the meeting of Sir James Craig and Mr. De Valera was of hopeful augury. If it were still necessary to deal with the situation by force, the force would be forthcoming, whatever sacrifices this might involve for the people of Great Britain. As for the suggestion that the Government should negotiate, 'those with whom we should negotiate are most illusive . . . there will be no peace until an adjustment is made—if, indeed, that be possible—with those actually carrying on, or inspiring, the policy of violence.'

This speech showed an accurate appreciation of the situation in Ireland; it was less accurate as an interpretation of the mind of the Government, or at least of that of the Prime Minister, unless the last lines were intended as a hint that the policy of surrender had already been decided on. That this was indeed the case seemed to be proved by the events of the next few days, which were to be of critical importance not only in the history of Ireland but in that of the Empire. The first of these events was the visit of the King and Queen to Belfast to open the first session of the new Parliament of Northern Ireland, which took place on the 22nd of June, the day on which Lord Donoughmore's motion was defeated in the House of Lords. The news that His Majesty intended to open the Parliament in person had been received with some misgiving in the South of Ireland, not because of any possible personal danger involved, but because it was feared that this action might compromise the position of the Crown as an impartial influence, and that Republican sentiment, which in Ireland is neither very deep nor strictly logical, might be still further alienated by this royal patronage of Belfast to the neglect of Dublin. These fears, however, proved groundless. Their Majesties were

indeed received in the northern capital with splendid demonstrations of popular loyalty, but in his speech from the throne the King made it clear that it was not for Belfast or Northern Ireland only that his visit was intended. 'This is a great and critical occasion for the Six Counties,' he said, 'but not for the Six Counties alone, for everything which interests them touches Ireland, and everything which touches Ireland finds an echo in the remotest corners of the Empire. . . . I appeal to all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and forget, and to join in making for the land they love a new era of peace, contentment, and good will.'

This message woke responsive echoes in the South among all those, and they were the majority, who desired to be allowed to live a quiet life. In all the circumstances, however, it was not calculated to appeal to those who were in arms for the independence of Ireland and saw in the establishment of an independent government in the North the crowning outrage to her nationhood. There was, indeed, at this time little enough sign of any disposition to forget and forgive. The month had already been signalised by a series of murders of peculiar atrocity—the victims including Protestant farmers,¹ ex-soldiers and ex-constables—culminating in that of Dean Finlay, a clergyman eighty years of age, who had once acted as chaplain to a Lord-Lieutenant.² In answer to the royal

¹ 'At about 16.30 hours on 30. 6. 21 a party of between 30 and 40 armed men arrived, some masked, bringing with them the two elder sons, X and Z, whom they had found in a hayfield. They locked the whole family in a room and then proceeded to loot the house and the out-buildings. Whilst this was going on Mrs. ——— fainted. When the daughters asked for water to bring her round it was refused. Later, the Sinn Feiners brought some filthy muddy water for her. Plenty of clean water was available. The house was then fired and the family allowed out. They were placed on a little hill just outside the back of the house. The two eldest sons were then taken and in full view of the rest of the family were put up against a wall and shot. Meanwhile the Sinn Feiners played ragtime music on the piano and one of the sons' violin. The shooting was carried out so that both men should die in agony, both hit in the stomach and thighs. . . . Arrangements have been made in ——— for the protection of the ——— family.' Thus the official report of a British officer. The concluding words read like bitter irony.

² It was characteristic of the attitude of the British Radical Press at this time that a leading London journal announced this crime under the heading 'Murder of a Priest,' the object being, apparently, to throw suspicion on the 'black-and-tans.'

message, however, it was felt that a special effort must be made. On the 24th, accordingly, a troop train carrying the 10th Hussars, who had formed part of the King's escort at Belfast, was blown up by a land mine at Adavoyle, ten miles south of Dundalk. Three soldiers and a guard were killed, and a large number of horses were killed or mutilated. On the same day two auxiliary cadets were murdered in Grafton Street, the fashionable shopping centre of Dublin.¹

This was the auspicious date chosen by Mr. Lloyd George to address a letter to De Valera, as 'the chosen leader of the great majority of Southern Ireland,' inviting him to attend a conference in London 'to explore to the utmost the possibility of a settlement' and to bring with him for the purpose any colleagues whom he might select. The publication of this invitation caused consternation among the loyalists of the South; for, apart from what they felt to be the disgrace of making advances to men whose hands were stained with the blood of the servants of the Crown, very few of them believed that any accommodation could be reached under which their lives and their property would be safeguarded; and they felt that, after all that they had done and suffered for the Crown and the Empire during the Great War, they were to be thrown to the wolves to save the Government from the consequences of its weakness and incompetence. The blow was all the more stunning as it was dealt by a veritable bolt from the blue. The 'firm' language of Ministers about making no terms with the 'murder gang' was still in their ears; the vote of the House of Lords, invited by the Government, which rejected the very thing the Prime Minister now proposed, was but two days old; there had been nothing in the recent utterances of Mr. Lloyd George himself to suggest that he contemplated any surrender to violence. What sinister forces had been at work to produce this sudden conversion nobody knew, though rumour was rife, and nobody outside intimate

¹ 'The military operations for the week (i.e. 19-25 June) included fifty-two attacks on the British forces. Thirty enemy patrols were engaged, seven barracks were sniped or attacked with bombs, one troop train was mined and derailed and another held up and attacked with rifle fire. Thirteen attacks on individuals took place' (*Irish Bulletin*, vol. v. no. 21; 'Weekly Review of the War,' No. 13).

political circles knows now. It was felt instinctively, however, that this proposal of the Government to negotiate on equal terms with rebels in arms meant the victory of Sinn Fein, and would involve consequences far beyond those contemplated by the Government itself or by those former Irish Unionists who had been in favour of compromise.

It was, in any case, now clear that, so far as the South was concerned, the Act of 1920 was as good as dead. An attempt was made to prove it to be alive when, on the 28th, the Parliament of Southern Ireland was solemnly opened in the Council Chamber of the Department of Agriculture. The experiment, however, only noised abroad the fact of its decease. Of the 128 members of the House of Commons only the four representatives of Trinity College were present, and only fifteen out of sixty-four Senators. After electing a Speaker, the House at once adjourned, never to meet again. Meanwhile the North, entrenched behind the provisions of the new Constitution, was prepared to negotiate for a settlement with the South on the basis of the provisions laid down in the Act for the regulation of common interests; and Sir James Craig, the Ulster Prime Minister, therefore at once accepted the invitation which Mr. Lloyd George had addressed to him simultaneously with that sent to Mr. De Valera.

The chosen representative of the great majority in Southern Ireland, on the other hand, showed little disposition to descend from the position which he had taken up, in which there was no room for compromise. On the same day that saw the first and last meeting of the Parliament of Southern Ireland was published the reply of the President of the Irish Republic to Mr. Lloyd George's invitation.¹ Mr. De Valera said that he was in consultation with such of the principal representatives of the Irish nation as were available, that he and they desired most earnestly to bring about a lasting peace between the English and Irish peoples, but that he could see no avenue by which a lasting peace could be reached if the British Premier 'denied Ireland's essential unity and set aside the principle of national self-determination.' He added

¹ *Irish Bulletin*, 28 June 1921.

that he was seeking a conference with certain representatives of the political minority in Ireland. The five gentlemen invited to this conference were, as announced in the same number of the *Bulletin*, Sir James Craig, the Earl of Midleton, Sir Maurice E. Dockrell, Unionist member for South Dublin in the Imperial Parliament, Sir Robert H. Woods, an eminent surgeon who had been elected as a Unionist for Dublin University mainly as a representative at Westminster of the medical faculty, and Mr. Andrew Jameson, head of the famous firm of whisky distillers and Chairman of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce.

Sir James Craig at once refused the invitation on the ground that he had already accepted that of the British Prime Minister. This refusal and Mr. De Valera's comment on it revealed the fundamental cleavage between Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionists. 'Mr. Lloyd George's proposal,' wrote the President, 'because of its implications is impossible of acceptance in its present form.' Irish political differences, he urged, ought to be settled on Irish soil, and in negotiating with Great Britain the Irish delegation ought to act as a unit on some common principle. It seemed, indeed, from the first as though it would prove impossible to find a basis even for discussion, let alone a settlement. Throughout the preliminary negotiations the Sinn Fein President and officials carefully avoided using a single phrase susceptible of being interpreted as a modification of their claim to be the legitimate Government of Ireland negotiating with a foreign power. The representatives of the Six Counties, on the other hand, 'stood with both feet on the Better Government of Ireland Act' and, as Sir James Craig put it, 'made no offers because they had nothing to give away.'

On 30 June, as an earnest of the genuineness of the Government's desire for an accommodation, four members of Dail Eireann—Messrs. Arthur Griffith, John McNeill, Staines, and Eamon Duggan—were released from Mountjoy Gaol, where they had been interned for eight months, in order that they might take part in the discussion. Meanwhile, the four 'representatives of the minority'—they were, of course, representatives in no strict sense—had accepted the invitation of Mr. De Valera, and the first conference between them and the Sinn Fein leaders took

place at the Dublin Mansion House on 4 July. The fact that the conference did not at once collapse, but was adjourned, was announced in the *Irish Bulletin* of the 5th as affording gratifying proof 'that Irishmen of hitherto widely divergent opinions can continue to deliberate upon the best means of showing a united front to England at this crisis.' To emphasise the moral of this phenomenon, Mr. De Valera directed that the day of the first meeting of the conference should be celebrated by a display of American flags, in significant commemoration of the Declaration of American Independence.

It chanced that at this time General Smuts, the Prime Minister of the South African Union, was in London, and the Government availed itself of his offer to act as mediator. Apart from the effect of such an intervention in the Dominions, where the Irish question was as little understood and was causing as much trouble as in the United States, it was thought that the South African statesman's reputation would give weight to any advice he might tender to the Irish leaders, while his experience in producing a working agreement among the warring elements in his own country would prove invaluable. On the 5th of July, accordingly, General Smuts visited Dublin and had a conference with the Republican chiefs. The immediate result was not hopeful, and the main impression which the General carried away was that of the complete imperviousness of Mr. De Valera to argument. It is possible, however, that his intervention did produce a certain effect; for at the close of the resumed conference at the Mansion House, on the 8th, the President addressed a letter to the Prime Minister accepting his invitation to the conference in London.

At the first Mansion House meeting it had been agreed that it would be impossible to conduct negotiations with any hope of a satisfactory outcome unless bloodshed in Ireland ceased. In spite of the ill success of earlier efforts to create an 'atmosphere' in somewhat similar circumstances, Mr. Lloyd George wrote to Lord Midleton expressing his agreement with this view, and General Sir Nevil Macready accordingly attended the second Mansion House conference with a view to discussing a cessation of hostilities. As the result of this, on Saturday the 10th,

a formal truce was signed by General Macready on the one part, and by Risteard Ua Maolchatha (Richard Mulcahy), Chief-of-Staff of the Irish Republican Army, on the other part. This truce was to take effect as from noon on the following Monday (11 June), so as to allow time for the news of it to be communicated to all parts of the country. In Dublin, where the news was welcomed with general rejoicing, the suspension of hostilities came into effect at once, the curfew being suspended, and the unarmed soldiers and 'black-and-tans' mixing freely with the people. Mr. De Valera had issued a proclamation as President, on the 9th, calling on all 'soldiers and citizens' to observe the strictest self-control and discipline during the truce. It was, however, a question of curious interest as to how far this direction would be obeyed. If it were not obeyed, it would show that the Sinn Fein Government had no power to come to decisions in the name of the nation; if it were obeyed, it would prove—what Sinn Fein had always strongly denied—that this Government was responsible for the whole policy of outrage, terrorism, and murder by which the extremists had sought to gain their ends.

The signs during the days spent in negotiation were not hopeful; indeed, the week-end before the coming into force of the truce was one of the bloodiest on record in Ireland. On 8 July the murder of a constable by Sinn Feiners in Belfast led to serious rioting, in the course of which fourteen people were killed and over a hundred wounded, and this rioting continued intermittently for over a week, with further casualties. On the 9th Mr. George B. O'Connor, who had been a Unionist candidate in Dublin, was murdered in Cork, where on the evening of the same day four unarmed soldiers were kidnapped and done to death.¹ On the same date three soldiers were killed in an ambush in Castleisland; one was murdered in Doneraile; an R.I.C. sergeant was murdered in Castlerea; and near Clonmel a girl of fifteen was killed by Sinn Feiners in an effort to murder her brother, an ex-soldier. On the 10th a farmer was murdered at Kilbride, Portarlinton. On the 7th July the *Irish Bulletin*

¹ They were being 'treated' by a friendly publican in celebration of the truce.

denied the statements made in certain British journals that there had been an 'easing-up' on the part of the Crown of its measures of repression since Mr. Lloyd George's letter, and described the 'terror' as still 'in full blast,' and in its issue of the 8th it gave a lurid account of the 'war on women and children.' Except in Belfast, however, not only the operations of the Crown forces, but organised Sinn Fein outrages, seem to have ceased from the coming into force of the truce, officers of the British Army and the Royal Irish Constabulary in some cases concerting with officers of the Republican Army measures for the preservation of order. As the *Irish Bulletin* of 21 July pointed out, this disposed of the legend of a 'moderate' and an 'extreme' section of Sinn Fein, so far as responsibility for the policy of terrorism was concerned.

The situation thus created was exploited by the Sinn Fein leaders with their usual ability. The truce itself had come to them as a gift of the gods when they were at their wits' end to know how to carry on the struggle. Their organisation was broken up; their funds were all but exhausted; their leaders were in prison or 'on the run';¹ in short—as some of them admitted later—the Government held them 'in the hollow of its hand.' In these circumstances the suspension of hostilities was wholly favourable to their cause. The Crown forces, baulked once more of their victory, were disheartened and disgusted, and it was doubtful whether, even if the struggle were resumed, they would ever again conduct it with the same spirit. The forces of the Republic, on the other hand, which had almost ceased to exist, at once began to recover their vigour. There was nothing in the truce to prevent their reorganisation, and this—very properly, from the Sinn Fein point of view—proceeded apace. Clearly, it was to the interest of the Republican leaders to protract the negotiations; for every day that passed strengthened their position and weakened that of the Government. This process was not confined to the balance of armed power. In Ireland, where nothing succeeds like success, Sinn Fein, so recently under the eclipse of defeat, now shone forth with all the prestige

¹ On 1 July the *Irish Bulletin* announced that forty-seven Sinn Fein M.P.s were in gaol, and fifty-two 'on the run.'

of victory, and the whole host of the timid and the indifferent hastened to range themselves under the Republican tricolour. In England the Government had behind it nothing but a public suffering from shell-shock, wholly ignorant of the true meaning of events in Ireland—and, indeed, of the events themselves—and apparently sunk in a boundless apathy.

President De Valera lost no time in using the situation thus created to advance the cause he had at heart. On the 9th of July he addressed a series of messages to the United States, to France, to Norway, and to Denmark, of which the general moral was that, in the event of the coming conference leading to the satisfaction of Ireland's just demands, 'British prestige will be restored, and young Ireland will live in history as having saved, by its courage and by its steadfastness, the ideals for which millions were led to offer up their lives in the Great War.'¹ To impress upon the outside world the nature of this steadfastness and courage the *Irish Bulletin* issued on the 13th a number of 'thrilling stories of the Guerilla War,' as a counter-blast to 'the British Government's ignoble propaganda against the Republican Army, the daily descriptions of these unpaid Irish Volunteers as "murder gangs" and "hired assassins."' The outside world was possibly impressed. Unfortunately, however, at the very time when this protest was being written and printed, fresh outrages were being committed in various parts of the country in the name of the I.R.A. As time went on, indeed, violations of the truce became more and more frequent: murderous assaults on constables, ex-constables and ex-soldiers, kidnappings and burnings. It is not suggested that these violations of the truce were ordered by the Republican leaders; it was obviously to their interest that they should not happen; but they showed, what was to be proved yet more tragically later, that the terrorist methods which had been sanctified in the name of patriotism had lighted a flame in Ireland which would not easily be put out.² It was more

¹ See *Irish Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 29 (11 July 1921).

² On 11 November, in answer to a question, Mr. T. W. Brown, the Irish Attorney-General, stated in the House of Commons that the R.I.C. had reported 528 breaches of the truce and the Dublin Metropolitan Police sixty-seven.

humiliating for the Government, but not so fateful for Ireland, that under cover of the truce the Republican courts again began to function, and that in various places forced levies were made on all and sundry for the support of the Republican Army.¹

Meanwhile the negotiations between the Government of the Irish Republic and that of Great Britain had been dragging out a weary course. On the 12th of July President De Valera went to London, accompanied by Mr. Arthur Griffith, Mr. Austin Stack, Mr. R. C. Barton, and Mr. Erskine Childers, and two days later he had his first interview with Mr. Lloyd George. On the next day the Prime Minister had a further interview with the President in the morning, and in the afternoon held a separate conversation with Sir James Craig and other members of the Parliament of Northern Ireland. Impenetrable mystery surrounded the conduct of these negotiations. It was soon clear, however, that the personal fascination and dialectical subtlety which had so often rescued the Prime Minister from difficulties were unavailing here. 'Negotiating with Mr. De Valera,' he is reported to have said, 'is like mounting a horse on a steam roundabout and trying to catch the man on the horse in front.' Negotiating with Sir James Craig, it seems, was like trying by persuasion to move a rock. The interview with Mr. Lloyd George was, indeed, scarce ended when the Ulster leader returned to Ireland, and there issued a declaration which showed that he had not budged an inch from the position he had taken up. To De Valera's talk about self-determination for the whole of Ireland he opposed the accomplished fact of self-determination for Northern Ireland, whose Parliament the King had so recently opened, and pointed out that De Valera had himself acquiesced in this fact by standing as a candidate for the Belfast Parliament. From this position, he said, the North had no intention of receding, though it would meet the South at any time on equal terms and work with it in the spirit of good will and co-operation.

De Valera, on the other hand, went on with the

¹ On 27 October the Minister for Defence of Dail Eireann issued a proclamation prohibiting compulsory levies for the I.R.A.

conversations, and on the 20th the Prime Minister handed him the proposals of the Government, which were, however, still kept secret from the public till the 15th of August. After a preamble enlarging on the desire of the British people that nothing should 'hinder Irish statesmen from joining together to build up an Irish state in free and willing co-operation with the other peoples of the Empire,' the document went on to offer Ireland forthwith 'the status of a Dominion,' with 'complete autonomy in taxation and finance,' the right to 'maintain her own Courts of Law and Judges, . . . her own military forces for home defence, her own constabulary and her own police.' It proposed that she should 'take over the Irish postal services and all matters relating thereto, education, land, agriculture, mining and minerals, forestry, housing, labour, unemployment, transport, trade, public health, health insurance, and the liquor traffic,' and 'in sum, that she shall exercise all those powers and privileges upon which the autonomy of the self-governing Dominions is based,' subject, however, to six conditions, 'vital to the welfare and safety of both Great Britain and Ireland, forming as they do the heart of the Commonwealth.' The control of the seas round Ireland was to be reserved to the British Navy; the Irish territorial force was to be kept 'within reasonable limits,' so as to conform in numbers with the military establishment of Great Britain; the Royal Air Force was to have facilities in Ireland for air defence and communications; voluntary recruiting for the Empire forces was to be permitted in Ireland; no protective duties were to be imposed between all parts of the British islands; and Ireland was to assume responsibility for a share of the debt of the United Kingdom and of the liability for war pensions, this share, failing agreement, to be determined by an independent arbitrator appointed from within His Majesty's dominions. The conditions of a settlement on these lines were to be embodied in a treaty ratified by the British and Irish Parliaments, but the settlement must 'allow for full recognition of the existing powers and privileges of the Parliament and Government of Northern Ireland, which cannot be abrogated except by their own consent.' The British Government would leave Irishmen to determine by

negotiations among themselves whether the new powers should be taken over by Ireland as a whole and administered by a single Irish body, or taken over separately by Southern and Northern Ireland, with or without a joint authority to harmonise their common interests. The Government would willingly assist in the negotiations of such a settlement, but they would not consent to any proposals which would kindle civil war in Ireland.

On 22 July De Valera returned to Dublin to consult his colleagues as to the answer to be given to these proposals, and by permission of the Government a meeting of the Dail Eireann was summoned for 16 August. It was noted, however, that the President had taken the position throughout that he was negotiating with the British Government on equal terms, as the elected head of the Irish Republic. To the National University, which had elected him Chancellor during his absence, he sent a letter acknowledging this honour done to 'the head of the State.' There were ominous signs, too, that Sinn Fein at large was in no mood for compromise. In the execution of the Government's order for the release of the interned and convicted members of Parliament, in order that they might attend the Dail, what the *Irish Bulletin* described as 'a disastrous exception' was made in the case of John McKeon, 'the hero of Ballinaslee,' a commandant of the Republican Army who was lying under sentence of death for killing a District Inspector of the R.I.C. while resisting arrest.¹ This exception was hotly resented by the Sinn Feiners, and the Government gave way rather than risk a breakdown of the negotiations. De Valera, however, did not wait for the meeting of the Dail before informing the Prime Minister, on his own account, that his offer was unacceptable; and on 10 August, after consulting his colleagues, he addressed him a letter confirming this judgment. The Government's draft was, indeed, appreciated and accepted 'to the extent that it implies a recognition of Ireland's separate nationhood and her right to self-determination'; but the offer of 'Dominion status' was rejected as

¹ He accepted the Treaty, and became a General of Division in the Free State Army.

'illusory' unless the 'right to secede' were sufficiently guaranteed. The independence of Ireland was claimed 'on the basis of moral right'; and the President asserted, for himself and his colleagues, the deep conviction 'that true friendship with England . . . can be obtained and most readily through amicable but absolute separation.' The present proposals were such as the Irish people could not be asked to accept, though he would have been ready to recommend 'a certain treaty of free association with the British Commonwealth group' if it would secure the allegiance of 'the present dissenting minority,' or to negotiate treaties about trade, armaments, and other matters of common interest. They were prepared to leave Ireland's share of the National Debt to be determined by three arbitrators, one chosen by Ireland, one by Great Britain, and a third by agreement, or, in default of such agreement, 'to be nominated, say, by the President of the United States.' The question at issue with 'the political minority'—i.e. Northern Ireland—was one 'for the Irish people themselves to settle,' but 'we cannot admit the right of the British Government to mutilate our country, either in its own interest or at the call of any section of our population.' In bringing Ulster to terms, however, they 'did not contemplate the use of force,' and if negotiation failed he suggested that the question might be referred to 'external arbitration.'

On 15 August the Government at last published the text of the terms offered to President De Valera on 20 July, his reply on 10 August, and a rejoinder by the Prime Minister on 13 August, together with a letter addressed to De Valera on 4 August by General Smuts advising him to accept the Dominion status offered and 'to leave Ulster alone for the present' in the sure hope that, sooner or later, economic considerations would lead her to seek union with the rest of Ireland. As for the Prime Minister, in his rejoinder of 13 August he said emphatically that the right of Ireland to secede from the allegiance to the King could not be admitted, and no claim that she should negotiate with Great Britain as a 'separate and foreign Power,' nor could the relations between Northern and Southern Ireland, nor any other question, be allowed to be referred to foreign arbitration.

He repeated that, if the offers of the Government were accepted in principle, their application in detail would form matter for discussion.

On 16 August Dail Eireann assembled in the Dublin Mansion House. The proceedings, conducted according to all the forms of an ordinary parliament, began by the taking by all the members of an oath 'to support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic,' the formula including the assertion that this oath was taken 'without equivocation and without any mental reservation whatever.' Then followed the address of President De Valera, in which he asserted once more the right of Ireland to complete independence, 'which could not be realised at the present time in any other way so suitably as through a Republic,' and declared it to be impossible to negotiate to any effect with the British Government, because the two parties to the negotiation had no common basis of principle.¹ At the adjourned meeting next day he asserted this attitude in yet more uncompromising language. 'We cannot, and we will not,' he said, 'on behalf of this nation, accept these terms.' As for the Six Counties, the Irish Republic would 'go a long way to satisfy the sentiments of Ulster'; but he insisted that 'the minority problem in Ireland had its origin in British policy.'²

These pronouncements caused something like consternation in those circles in England which believed, or affected to believe, that the Irish question would be for ever laid to rest by the concession of Dominion status. English Radical organs like the *Nation*, which had consistently supported Sinn Fein and vilified the police and soldiers in Ireland, betrayed their discomfiture by desperate efforts to find in De Valera's utterances phrases which might be twisted into an expression of some willingness to compromise. The Northcliffe Press, whose criticisms of the Government had previously done so much to encourage Sinn Fein, enlarged on the far-reaching character of Mr. Lloyd George's offer, and for the first time for about two years warned De Valera that British public opinion would not tolerate an Irish Republic.

¹ *Irish Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 55 (17 August 1921).

² *Ibid.* vol. 5, no. 66 (18 August).

On 19 August the Prime Minister declared in the House of Commons that the terms offered by the Government to Ireland had defined the issues more clearly than they had ever been defined before, and that their rejection would be 'an unmistakable challenge to the authority of the Crown and the unity of the Empire in the very heart of the Empire.' In the House of Lords the Lord Chancellor (Viscount Birkenhead) defended the action of the Government in attempting to reach a settlement, but went still further in warning Sinn Fein that, in the event of a rejection of the offer, Great Britain would be committed to hostilities in Ireland on an unprecedented scale. This declaration of Lord Birkenhead was attacked by a small section of the Radical Press as provocative, but, in general, British newspapers of all complexions emphasised with surprising unanimity the inevitable result of a refusal of Sinn Fein to come to terms. On the other hand, the *Irish Bulletin* commented caustically on the contradiction involved in threatening dire consequences in the event of the Irish 'declining as a free Dominion to join voluntarily a free association of free nations.' The *Bulletin*, indeed, which represented day by day the views of the Republican leaders, denied that the British offer was really one of Dominion status as understood in the overseas Dominions, and it protested against the action of the Government in publishing General Smuts' letter, the comments contained in which, it argued, were not justified by the actual proposals made by the Government, which implied the 'military subjection of Ireland' and were 'incompatible with an independent voice in foreign affairs.' The rights and privileges of the Dominions, it argued, were all summed up in the right to secede, which 'gives them the authentic stamp of freedom; that is, of free choice; self-determination.' The *Bulletin* denied, however, that the phrase 'the right to secede' was applicable to Ireland, 'which can never be said to secede from an authority never acknowledged.'¹

¹ This claim, frequently repeated by De Valera and others, that Ireland never acknowledged the sovereignty of the Crown is, of course, quite without foundation either in history or in public law. It was examined, both from the point of view of a historian and a canonist, by the late Father Walter McDonald, D.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the

On 21 August the Dail met in secret session in order to agree upon its formal answer to the offer of the Government. From all parts of the world came messages urging the Sinn Fein leaders to listen to reason. They were, however, in a singularly difficult position, and therefore, both in order to guard themselves and to add weight to whatever decision might be arrived at, they determined to consult those who might be considered to be more closely in touch with opinion throughout the country than the members of the Dail, who had been elected under the conditions already described and could therefore hardly be considered as perfectly representative. For this purpose the Executive Council of Sinn Fein, representing all the district councils in Ireland, was summoned to Dublin to sit concurrently with the Dail, and this met at the Mansion House on the 24th. On the 26th a public session of the Dail was held. At the outset of the proceedings President De Valera announced that, as this was a new Dail, the Ministry had resigned. On the motion of Mr. John McKeon, Mr. De Valera was next re-elected 'President of the Irish Republic,' and in this capacity proceeded to nominate a new Ministry, all of whom were at once elected. The most notable of the appointments were, perhaps, those of Michael Collins as Minister of Finance and the Countess Markievicz, a popular figure at Liberty Hall, as Secretary for Labour.

Before the nomination of the new Ministers the President read the letter addressed by him on the previous day to the Prime Minister, in which he announced the Dail's unanimous rejection of the proposals for a settlement made on behalf of the Government. In this document De Valera once more enlarged on the principle of self-determination, stigmatising as fundamentally false 'in Ireland's case to speak of her seceding from a partnership

Catholic College of Maynooth, in his *Some Ethical Questions of Peace and War* (1919). In this he demolished the Sinn Fein position with pitiless logic, his intimate knowledge of Ireland and its history giving his arguments special weight. The book was violently assailed in the *Catholic Times* (No. 22, 'Ireland's Plain Rights'), to which Father McDonald replied in a postscript to *Certain Criticisms* (1920). The most conclusive refutation of the Sinn Fein claim remains, however, that put forward by Mr. Lloyd George—namely, that for over a hundred years the representatives of Ireland had taken the oath of allegiance to the King and sat in the Imperial House of Commons.

she had not accepted, or from an allegiance she has not undertaken to render,' and as fundamentally unjust 'the claim to subordinate her independence to British strategy.' Dail Eireann, he concluded, was willing to appoint representatives to negotiate a peace 'on the broad general principle of government by consent of the governed'; the responsibility for a renewal of the conflict would rest upon the British Government, if it refused to come to terms on this principle.

The Prime Minister replied, in the name of the Cabinet, on the 26th. The reply was long and argumentative and, to judge from internal evidence, addressed not so much to the Sinn Fein leader as to the world in general and the United States in particular. Mr. Lloyd George declared it to be 'playing with phrases' to say that the principle of government by the consent of the governed involved the recognition of the demand to recognise Ireland as a foreign Power. The demand that Ireland should be treated as a separate sovereign Power, with no allegiance to the Crown and no loyalty to the sister nations of the Commonwealth, was one which the most famous national leaders in Irish history, from Grattan to Parnell and Redmond, had always explicitly disowned. In reply to the contention that Ireland had never undertaken to render allegiance to the Crown, he pointed out that for over a hundred years the representatives of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament had, without protest, taken the oath of allegiance. The British Government had offered to Ireland all that O'Connell and Thomas Davis asked, and more; and from all quarters of the world had come nothing but praise for the generosity of their policy. The Government did not believe that the permanent reconciliation of Great Britain and Ireland could ever be attained without a recognition of their physical and historical interdependence, which made complete political and economic separation impossible for both. Pressing this point, Mr. Lloyd George quoted from President Lincoln's first presidential address:

Physically speaking we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. . . . It is impossible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous and more satis-

factory after separation than before. . . . Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always ; and when, after much loss on both sides and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions as to terms of intercourse are again upon you.

‘ I thought I had made it clear,’ wrote Mr. Lloyd George, ‘ both in my conversations with you and in my two subsequent communications, that we can discuss no settlement which involves a refusal on the part of Ireland to accept our invitation to free, equal and loyal partnership in the British Commonwealth under one Sovereign.’ He pointed out that action was being taken in various directions which, if continued, would prejudice the truce and must ultimately lead to its termination. While, therefore, he was prepared to make every allowance as to time which would advance the cause of peace, he added that the Government were not prepared to prolong a mere exchange of notes, and that it was essential that some definite and immediate progress should be made towards a basis upon which further negotiations could usefully proceed. They could not proceed unless the essential facts of the situation were recognised and admitted. Mr. De Valera’s letter, unfortunately, had shown no progress towards such an understanding.

A second phase of the negotiations opened after the definite rejection by the Dail of the British Government’s proposals of 20 June. On the Prime Minister’s summons Cabinet meetings were held at Inverness, in order that his holiday in Scotland might not be cut short ; and eventually, on 7 September, they resulted in his sending to De Valera an invitation for a conference at Inverness on the 20th. The basis of the conference was to be ‘ how the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire can best be reconciled with Irish national aspirations ’ ; and the Prime Minister’s letter of invitation laid down no other condition than that the British Government could not accept the setting up of an Irish Republic or any repudiation of allegiance to the Crown. On 14 September De Valera’s answer, as agreed to by Dail Eireann, was published, in circumstances distinctly embarrassing to a continuation of the negotiations. In its first paragraph it accepted the

invitation, but it then went aggressively to reaffirm that Ireland had already declared its independence as a sovereign state, and that its representatives would enter into the conference on that basis. This reply had been sent a day or two earlier to Mr. Lloyd George at Inverness by Sinn Fein emissaries, and he had sent word to De Valera that he was willing to treat it as withdrawn if it were redrafted and an acceptance sent without the latter part, which would make a conference impossible. This diplomatic proposal, however, was ignored by De Valera, who at once sent the Sinn Fein reply, as originally communicated, to the Press.

Once more the negotiations had come to a deadlock. On the 15th the Prime Minister telegraphed to De Valera cancelling his invitation to the conference, on the ground that it was impossible to proceed with it now that De Valera had insisted on the independence of Ireland as a sovereign state—a point on which the British Government could not give way. At the same time he intimated that, owing to his being unwell, he would take time for consultation with his colleagues before taking further steps. On the 16th De Valera sent a reply telegram, in which he expressed surprise at the way in which his acceptance of the proposed conference had been received, and said that his own view was that the negotiators should meet ‘without prejudice’ to the claims made on either side. The inevitable comment on this rejoinder, and one that was generally made, was that, if that was what he had meant, he would have been well advised to use that phrase, which would have contained no offence, rather than make an aggressive statement that was bound to be offensive. Any lawyer, or experienced negotiator, would have known that ‘without prejudice’ would be harmless.

Thus, after two months’ parley, during which the forces of Sinn Fein had ample time to strengthen their position in Ireland, the two sides at last met at the council table. The opening conference was held at 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister’s official residence in London, on Wednesday the 10th of October 1921. On the British side both parties forming the Coalition Government were equally represented: the Liberals by the Prime Minister,

the Colonial Secretary (Winston Churchill), and the Irish Secretary (Sir Hamar Greenwood), and the 'Unionists' by Austin Chamberlain, leader of the House of Commons, the Lord Chancellor (Lord Birkenhead), and the Secretary for War (Sir Laming Worthington-Evans). The Irish plenipotentiaries were Arthur Griffith (Minister for Foreign Affairs), Michael Collins (Finance Minister), Eamon J. Duggan (liaison officer), and George Gavan Duffy, Sinn Fein 'ambassador' in Rome. The absence of President De Valera was much commented on. If reports current at the time are to be believed, this was due to a clever manœuvre on the part of his colleagues, who rightly thought that his presence would not conduce to peace, and had no difficulty in persuading him that to take part in a conference of Ministers would not be consonant with his dignity as head of a sovereign state.

Inside or outside the conference room, however, the President had no intention of allowing his principles to be flouted or his existence forgotten. His opportunity came sooner than could have been feared. On the eve of the meeting he had issued a characteristic proclamation to the Irish people in which, while repeating 'the ardent desire that the secular conflict between the rulers of Britain and the Irish people may happily be brought to an end,' he emphasised the principle that the right for the maintenance of which they had struggled was 'in its nature indefeasible' and could not, therefore, 'be either relinquished or compromised.' 'The power against us,' he said, 'will use every artifice it knows in the hope of dispiriting, dividing, weakening us. We must all beware.' A few days later he proclaimed to all the world what he meant by the indefeasible right which could not be compromised. The peace conference had received the approval of the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops, assembled at Maynooth, on the eve of its opening; the Cardinal Archbishop of Boston had telegraphed wishing it success in the name of the Church in the United States; and, as a crowning benediction, a message of Pope Benedict XV to King George V was published by the Foreign Office on 20 October, in which His Holiness prayed that God might grant to His Majesty 'the great joy and imperishable glory of bringing to an end the age-long

dissension.' To the President this message, and the King's answer to it, seemed to be an artifice of the enemy, intended to strengthen the usurped authority of an alien king over Ireland by its implied recognition by the head of the Church. He thought it incumbent upon him to protest, and on the 21st sent the Pope a long telegram in which he pointed out that His Holiness was mistaken in supposing that the people of Ireland owed any allegiance to the British King, and calling his attention to the fact that 'the independence of Ireland has been formally proclaimed by the regularly elected representatives of the people of Ireland, and ratified by subsequent plebiscites.'

This pronouncement, of which the importance as defining the standpoint of a powerful section of opinion in Ireland was only to be recognised later, was extremely disconcerting to those who had been busy persuading the British people that the conference would bring peace by devising a formula of agreement satisfactory to all parties in Ireland. For a while it seemed as though the immediate result would be the break-up of the conference. On Monday, the 24th, the Prime Minister, in answer to questions, described De Valera's action as 'a grave challenge,' declared that the position of the Government had been made abundantly clear, and said that the conference could not proceed on any other basis. On this day the conference did not meet, on the pretext that a sub-committee was at work on matters essential to its deliberations; and Michael Collins hurried over to Dublin with the object, it was supposed, of curbing the President's untimely candour.

After all De Valera, in his proclamation to the people of Ireland, had called upon them to maintain 'an unwavering faith in those who have been deputed to act on the nation's behalf,' and he had presided at the Cabinet which had drawn up their instructions. It was well known that all the deputies were Republican in sentiment, and that all were equally bent on realising, sooner or later, the ideal of national independence. The sole difference between them was as to the time and the method of such realisation. By accepting the invitation to a conference, on the terms of reference laid down by the Prime Minister,

the President had himself admitted the possibility of an accommodation; it was for 'those deputed on the nation's behalf,' who alone could gauge the possibilities of the situation, to determine what the nature of the accommodation should be. This was the view of Arthur Griffith and his colleagues, and it prevailed. By whatever arguments persuaded, De Valera subsided, and the conferences in London were resumed. There was, however, little sign of an accommodation being reached; and, meanwhile, it became increasingly clear that, while the organs of the Union Government in Ireland were becoming demoralised owing to the uncertainty of the fate of all those who had given it their support, those of the Republic were being systematically strengthened. At last the apparently inexhaustible patience of the British Government was worn out, and at the session of the conference which met on the afternoon of the 5th of December the Irish plenipotentiaries were told that an agreement must be reached that night, and that, failing this, the conference would be broken off, with all the incalculable consequences that must ensue. This clinched the matter. The Irish representatives well knew that, if the Government were really to carry out its threat of using the full strength of the nation to assert its authority over the rebellious elements in Ireland, there could be but one ending, and that a speedy one. They knew, moreover, that in this unequal contest they would no longer be backed by the sympathy of the United States, still less by that of the Dominions. In short, they saw the necessity of compromise. They still fought hard to extort the utmost in the way of concession, and it was not till nearly 3 o'clock in the morning of the 6th that an agreement was at last reached and the signatures of the plenipotentiaries on both sides were affixed to the memorable treaty for the establishment of an 'Irish Free State.'

By this instrument it was agreed that the Irish Free State was to have 'the same constitutional status in the community of nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa' (Arts. I, II). The ancient office of Lord-

Lieutenant was abolished, and 'the representative of the Crown in Ireland was to be appointed in like manner as the Governor-General of Canada' (Art. III). The stumbling-block of the oath of allegiance was evaded by a singular formula. Article IV ran: 'The oath to be taken by members of the Parliament of the Irish Free State shall be in the following form: "I . . . do solemnly swear true faith and allegiance to the constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established, and that I will be faithful to H.M. King George V, his heirs and successors by law, in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations."' By Article V the Free State assumed responsibility for a share in the National Debt, war pensions, etc., subject to any just counter-claims on the part of Ireland, 'the amount of such sums being determined, in default of agreement, by the arbitration of one or more independent persons being citizens of the British Empire.' Article VI provided for the coast defence of Ireland by the British fleet, pending an arrangement, to be negotiated in five years' time, by which the Free State should undertake a share in this duty. The Free State was at the same time empowered to maintain armed vessels for the protection of revenue and fisheries. Certain harbour facilities were conceded by the Free State to the Imperial Government in time of peace and war (Art. VII and annex). It was stipulated that the armed forces of the Free State 'shall not exceed in size such proportion of the military establishments maintained in Great Britain as that which the population of Ireland bears to the population of Great Britain' (Art. VIII). The Free State Government agreed to compensate all public servants discharged by it or retiring in consequence of the change of government resulting from the treaty (Art. X). Articles XII to XIV, inclusive, were concerned with the burning question of the exclusion of Ulster. For a month after the passing of the Act of Parliament for the ratification of the treaty the powers of the Government of the Free State were not to be exercisable as respects Northern Ireland, where the Act of 1920 was to remain in force (Art. XI); and if, before the expiration

of this month, a joint petition of both Houses of the Northern Parliament was presented to the King to this effect, the Act of 1920 was to continue to apply to the Six Counties, over which the powers of the Free State Parliament would no longer extend, 'Provided, that if an address is so presented, a commission consisting of three persons, one to be appointed by the Government of the Irish Free State, one to be appointed by the Government of Northern Ireland, and one, who shall be chairman, to be appointed by the British Government, shall determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland, and for the purposes of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and of this instrument, the boundary of Northern Ireland shall be such as may be determined by such Commission' (Art. XII). If at any time Northern Ireland should elect to come into the Free State, the Parliament of Northern Ireland was to continue to exercise the power conferred on it by the Act of 1920, but the Free State Parliament was to have, in respect of matters on which the Parliament of Northern Ireland was not competent to legislate, the same powers as in the rest of Ireland (Art. XIV). Neither the Parliament of Northern Ireland, nor that of the Free State, was to endow or favour, directly or indirectly, any religious denomination, or to divert property from any such denomination or educational establishment, except for public utility purposes and on payment of compensation (Art. XVI). By way of provisional arrangement for the administration of Southern Ireland during the interval between the signing of the treaty and the constitution of the Parliament and Government of the Free State, a meeting was to be summoned of 'members of Parliament elected for constituencies in Southern Ireland since the passing of the Government of Ireland Act,' and arrangements were to be made for establishing a Provisional Government to which the British Government would transfer the powers and machinery necessary for the discharge of its duties, this arrangement to continue in force for not more than twelve months (Art. XVII).

An annex to the treaty defined the privileges and

powers reserved by the British Government as necessary for the defence of the United Kingdom by sea and air and the general security of communications. Clause 1 specified that Admiralty property and rights at the dock-yard port of Berehaven were to be retained as then existing, and the harbour defences and facilities for coastal defence by air at Queenstown, Belfast, Lough Swilly and Belfast Lough were to remain under British care. Clause 2 provided that the British Government was to be entitled to land additional cables or to establish additional wireless stations, for communication with the outside world, and that the Irish Government should make no alterations in existing cable rights or wireless stations except by agreement with the British Government. Lighthouses, buoys, beacons, etc., were to be maintained by the Irish Government and not to be removed or added to except by agreement with the Government of Great Britain.

Such were the articles of agreement of the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland which it was fondly hoped would bring not only an end to the age-long strife between the two countries, but peace to Ireland itself. In the terms of the instrument there was little to suggest any such gratifying finality. That they represented a compromise between conflicting principles and ideals was inevitable in view of the conditions under which the pact was made. Neither side was in a position to make its will prevail. 'We were, in fact,' said Lord Birkenhead on the day following the signing of the Treaty, 'engaged in a war under circumstances more difficult than war conducted under normal conditions, and there was no prospect of real success unless we developed the whole scale of our military operations and told the world that we were undertaking a struggle under conditions comparable in some respects to those a few years ago in South Africa.'¹ 'Had we been able to beat the British out of Ireland,' said Michael Collins, 'there need have been no Treaty; but we had not beaten the enemy, and neither had he beaten us. That was the plain position.'² Whatever may have been the case in July, when the

¹ At Manchester.

² Speech at Cork, 12 March, 1922.

Prime Minister suggested the conference, the situation in December, after Sinn Fein had taken advantage of the truce to recuperate its forces, was probably described accurately enough by Lord Birkenhead; for a renewal of the war would have involved a far greater effort on the part of the forces of the Crown than would have been necessary a few months earlier. On the other hand, were Sinn Fein to insist on reaping the full fruits of its victory at once, and to refuse to agree to the concessions necessary to 'save the face' of His Majesty's Ministers, it would risk losing all, since Mr. Lloyd George made it clear that any further procrastination would mean the breaking off of the negotiations and the resumption of the war with all the forces of the United Kingdom. It was, in fact, this threat which at last induced the Irish plenipotentiaries to set their hands to the agreement. Most of them did so with the honest intention of honouring their signatures, at least in the letter. Not one did so in the belief that the settlement thus arrived at was final.

That this was the case was speedily made clear in the most fundamental question of all. In the House of Lords, on 14 December, Lord Curzon declared that the 'essential principles' vindicated in the Treaty were 'the supremacy of the Crown, the security of the United Kingdom, and the integrity of the Empire.' The first of these principles, which in effect involved the third, was supposed to be secured by the oath prescribed under Article IV. Now the language of this article, more than any other, bore upon it the marks and scars of the nine hours of wordy warfare which had preceded the signature of the Treaty. It made it quite clear that the Irish plenipotentiaries had to the last resisted the idea of any allegiance to the Crown. The resistance was in part overcome; but it may be doubted if the compromise adopted was less derogatory to the dignity of the Sovereign than would have been a frank abdication of the last shadow of his authority. For the old clear-cut oath of allegiance prescribed by all the Dominion Constitutions was substituted a complicated formula, embracing language and ideas new to the Constitution, and so worded as to be capable of various interpretations. Allegiance was to be primarily to the Free State; to the King 'faithfulness'

was to be sworn 'in virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain and her adherence to and membership of the group of nations forming the British Commonwealth of Nations.' One is inclined to sympathise with Mr. Tom Johnson when, in the course of the debate in the Dail on the oath, he exclaimed: 'I defy Ministers to explain that clause to me or to the House.' It was made clear, too, in the course of the same debate, that 'faithfulness' is a conception susceptible of various interpretations;¹ in any case it was contingent on Ireland preserving her 'common citizenship with Great Britain,' and would at any time be abrogated were she to exercise the right, claimed for her in virtue of her Dominion status, to secede from the 'British Commonwealth of Nations.'² Meanwhile the position of the King in Southern Ireland was to be as humiliating as Sinn Fein sentiment could make it. It is impossible to read the Dail debates on the place of the Crown in the Constitution without resenting, not so much the vulgar insults directed by the more ill-conditioned deputies against the person of the King, as the policy of British Ministers in forcing the recognition of the Crown on people who openly proclaimed that they did not want it, and so exposing it to the ignominy of being described by Irish Ministers as a meaningless symbol which they had only consented to recognise, because to have refused

¹ 'Whenever I am called upon to declare or affirm or to swear such an oath it will be distinctly on the understanding, that my faithfulness to King George V, his heirs and successors, will not bind me to any more faithfulness than to any other citizen of this community, or to any other king or potentate, or prince, or person in the world' (Mr. Tom Johnson in the Dail, 5 October 1922, *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 16).

² In criticising the letter in which General Smuts advised the Dail to accept the offer of Dominion status, the *Irish Bulletin* (vol. 5, No. 54, 16 August 1921) quoted Mr. Bonar Law's statement in the House of Commons on 20 March 1920: 'If the self-governing Dominions, Australia, Canada, chose to-morrow to say "We will no longer make a part of the British Empire" we would not try to force them. Dominion Home Rule means the right to decide their own destinies.'

Mr. Sean Milroy, in supporting the Treaty in the Dail, said: 'This Treaty is no more a final settlement than this is the final generation. . . . A time will probably come when a revision of this Treaty will be required . . . when that time comes this Treaty, and the powers in it, will have given the Irish nation that strength and vitality that will make it better for England to find a way to revise this Treaty by brains and thought than by the arbitrament of the sword' (*Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 8, 20 September 1922).

to do so would have been to risk the ruin of their cause.¹

The equivocal position in which the Crown was thus placed was not improved by the doubt left by the Treaty as to what alteration, if any, had been made in the constitutional relation of the Crown to Ireland. Southern Ireland, presumably, no longer formed part of the United Kingdom; yet no change was made in the royal style.² In what capacity, then, did the King reign in Ireland? Mr. Gavan Duffy, one of the signatories of the Treaty and later a member of President Griffith's Cabinet, put the question with characteristic bluntness. 'If you are going to insist on shoving the royal gentleman in here,' he said, 'then tell us what King you allude to. The King as spoken of in this country for the last hundred and twenty years is the King of Great Britain and Ireland. Is that the gentleman referred to? Or, again, is it the King of Ireland? Or is it the King of the British Commonwealth?'³ The matter was certainly in doubt. What was not doubtful was the intention of Sinn Féin, if forced to accept the supremacy of the Crown, to make this as meaningless as possible and to thrust the Crown itself, even as a symbol, contemptuously into the background.

¹ 'The position to-day in England is that the humblest Member in Westminster wields a more real power and more authority than the British King, and that the King has become a useful fiction, an imposing symbol, but that his majesty is the majesty of the people. In Ireland under this Constitution, the real power is in the hands of the people acting through their Parliament, no matter what fictitious or theoretical powers are stated to reside elsewhere' (Mr. Kevin O'Higgins in the Dail, 20 September 1922, *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 8, col. 486). Speaking of the oath, in October, he said: 'With regard to this Article . . . it is not a particularly pleasing task to stand over it, and it is not a pleasant task to submit it here to an Irish Assembly. We would much like if the necessity for so submitting it did not exist,' etc., etc. (*ibid.* Im. 1, Uimh. 16, col. 1049).

² Is the fiction maintained that the Irish Free State remains part of the United Kingdom? I find in Sec. 2 (1) of the Free State Constitution Act, 1922, that 'Goods transported during the current year from or to the Irish Free State or from *any other part of the United Kingdom* or the Isle of Man shall not . . . be treated as goods imported or exported as the case may be.' This has been cited in Court in Northern Ireland in support of a claim to jurisdiction of the Northern Courts over offences committed in Southern Ireland, a claim which was upheld. It is to be noted, too, that the representative peers from Southern Ireland continued, after as before, to sit in the House of Lords.

³ Dail Eireann, *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 12, 26 September 1922, col. 776.

This was made very clear during the debates that raged round the Treaty during the next month, and culminated in civil war. Even those who, like Arthur Griffith, accepted the Treaty, and declared their intention to abide by it honestly, gave no hint of any new-born loyalty to the Crown, even when they did not attack it. Others were less reticent. In the Dail debate of 21 December Mr. Gavan Duffy stated his intention of voting for the Treaty he had signed; but he none the less denounced it as 'extorted' and complained of the indignity of thrusting upon the nation 'an alien King.' 'It will be our duty,' he said, 'to relegate the King of England to outer darkness if we can, and we can do it if we like. . . . Any Government worthy of the name will be able to place that foreign King at a respectful distance from the Irish people.'

This was mere sound and fury, perhaps, intended to bring waverers into the Treaty fold; for, as Michael Collins said later,¹ they could accept the Treaty and fight for a Republic afterwards. It represented, however, a sentiment which was to find expression later, under the Provisional Government and the Free State, in the expunging of the royal cypher and arms from official documents and the tendency to speak of the President² as head of the Free State. The supremacy of the Crown, in short, may have been vindicated by the Treaty so far as the international status of Ireland is concerned; but in Southern Ireland it could hardly be described even as a polite fiction. For the ideal of those who signed the Treaty remained unaltered, and it certainly did not include the integrity of the Empire. It was restated by Arthur Griffith at the meeting of the Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis* in Dublin, on 21 February 1922, in clear and unmistakable language. 'What we are seeking,' he said, 'is that while working out our own destiny in Ireland, we shall . . . seek to be on terms of amity with the people of England. I believe that out of that amity will arise understanding, which may lead, if at some future time Ireland wishes to become an independent nation, to such a situation as occurred in the case of Norway and

¹ Debate of 7 January 1922.

² I.e. the Prime Minister. He is President of the Executive Council.

Sweden.’¹ Such, too, were the views of Michael Collins. Speaking in the Dail, on 21 December 1921, in defence of his action in signing the Treaty, he said that ‘in his opinion it gave Ireland freedom—not the ultimate freedom that all nations hoped for and struggled for, but freedom to achieve that end.’² He enlarged on the same theme at a mass meeting in Dublin on 5 March 1922. ‘Every one knew,’ he said, ‘that in the event of a settlement some postponement of the full realisation of our national ideal would have to be agreed to.’ Great Britain, he argued, believed that she could not afford now ‘to acquiesce in a forcible breaking away, which would show her so-called Empire to be so intolerable, or herself so feeble as to be unable to prevent it.’ ‘But,’ he added, ‘she will acquiesce in the ultimate separation of the units, we amongst them, by evolution, which will not expose her and not endanger her.’³ Both the conspicuous champions of the Treaty, then, differed from the intransigent Republicans, not in their ideals, but only in their conception of the methods by which these ideals could be realised. This being so, the ultimate success of the Treaty as an instrument of healing depended not upon any oath, but upon the degree to which it removed the outstanding causes of quarrel between Great Britain and Ireland on the one hand and between the rival interests in Ireland itself on the other.

From this point of view the obvious criticism of the Treaty is that it left unsettled certain questions of the first importance between the two countries, and created others—notably the customs barrier—not calculated to produce a peaceful atmosphere. The first of these questions was that of the adjustment of the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland which, under Article V, was, failing an agreement, to be submitted to arbitration. In view of the claims made by the Sinn Féin leaders, and the promises made by them to their followers of

¹ ‘If they made peace with the English people now, that did not say that they were for ever bound not to ask for more, and in the mean time they would move on in comfort and peace toward their goal’ (Speech in the Dail, 8 January 1922). The quotations are from *Arguments for the Treaty*, by Arthur Griffith (Dublin, 1922).

² *Arguments for the Treaty*, by Michael Collins, President of the Provisional Government (Dublin, 1922), p. 3.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 11, 14.

complete exemption from the burdens imposed by the Great War, it was difficult to see how any possible award could be otherwise than a disappointment and a fresh source of grievance. The matter was, however, of secondary importance, because it could always be adjusted by the British Government giving way in the interests of peace. It was otherwise with the provision for a readjustment of the boundaries between Northern and Southern Ireland. In a long correspondence with the British Prime Minister,¹ Sir James Craig had made it perfectly clear that Northern Ireland took its stand on the Act of 1920 ; and that, while disclaiming any intention of interfering with whatever arrangements the South chose to make, it refused to be a party to a conference of which the avowed object was the modification of that Act by which the boundaries and the constitution of the North had been settled. At the same time he claimed that, in justice, whatever powers and privileges were bestowed upon the South should also be given to the Six Counties, notably in respect of the ' reserved services.' ² The publication of this correspondence, which had been kept secret at the request of Mr. Lloyd George, caused some sensation in England, where it was felt, with good reason, that had it been made public earlier, the Treaty would hardly have taken the form it did. It served also to explain to the British public the extraordinary bitterness caused by the Treaty in Northern Ireland. In vain attempts were made later to minimise the import of the proposed ' rectification.' The Republican plenipotentiaries knew well that they meant by it the transference to the South of, at the least, the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone ; and it was clear from the language of Mr. Lloyd George in Parliament that this was also what was in his own mind. ' There is no doubt,' he said, ' that since the Act of 1920 the majority of the people of two counties prefer to be with their southern neighbours to being under the Northern Parliament.' Lord Birkenhead, in the fervour of his repentance at having once acted as galloper for the Ulster ' rebels,' added insult to injury.

¹ Published in the newspapers on 14 Dec. 1921.

² Complaints were loud later of the activities of Sinn Fein employees in the Post Office service in Northern Ireland and of the failure of the Imperial Government to take action.

'A Boundary Commission, he said, 'will examine into the boundary lines with a view to rendering impossible such an incident as that of a few days ago, in which the popularly elected bodies of one or two of these districts were excluded from their habitations by representatives of the Northern Parliament on the ground that they were not discharging their duties properly.'¹ It was a reckless charge of tyrannous injustice brought against the Northern Government, and in the circumstances of the moment it was—to use Lord Birkenhead's own language—an act of 'precipitate imbecility.' The effect was completed when the Prime Minister, amid the cheers of a subservient House of Commons, exclaimed: 'Though I am against the coercion of Ulster, I do not believe in Ulster coercing others.' The news of the signing of the Treaty had excited wrath and dismay in the Protestant North; these ministerial glosses upon it completed the process of disillusionment, and swept away at a blow the whole effect of the King's visit to Belfast, which was now suspected of having been no more than a move in the game of deception. The utterances of Mr. Lloyd George's new-found friends in the South seemed to confirm the worst suspicions. 'The arrangement in regard to North-East Ulster,' said Michael Collins,² 'is not ideal. But then the position in North-East Ulster is not ideal. If the Free State is established, however, union is certain. Forces of persuasion and *pressure* are embodied in the Treaty which will bring the North-East into a united Ireland. If they join us they can have control of their own area. If they stay outside Ireland, then they can only have their own corner, and cannot, and will not, have the counties and areas which belong to Ireland and to the Irish people, according to the wishes of the inhabitants. Then upon the area remaining outside will fall the burdens and restrictions of the 1920 Partition Act. The disabilities cannot be removed without our consent. If the North-East does not come in, then they are deciding upon bankruptcy for themselves, and, remember, this is not our wish but their own.'

¹ At Manchester, 7 Dec. 1921. It is interesting to note that in May 1923 the Free State Government meted out exactly the same treatment to the Kerry County Council, and for the same reason.

² Speech of 5 March 1922, *loc. cit.* p. 13.

The atmosphere created in Ireland by the Treaty was thus from the first not one of peace but of war, as was to be all too soon made clear. The British Government, too, which had hoped by this expedient to rid itself of responsibility for the troubles of the turbulent island, found itself in peril of being so placed that it could only do so at the cost of what remained of its honour. It was a minor matter, perhaps, that it had to watch helplessly while the loyalists of the South were harried, robbed, murdered, and driven into exile by the lawless elements unloosed upon Ireland by the abdication of its authority; for Great Britain has always prided herself on her faithfulness to her treaty obligations, and—as will be seen—safeguards for the Protestant minority in the South found no place in this Treaty. It was otherwise with the question of the Ulster boundary. This was, indeed, postponed by the outbreak of the civil war in Southern Ireland; but sooner or later it was sure to emerge,¹ and whenever it did so the Imperial Government would find itself faced with the alternative of breaking the contract made with the Ulstermen under the Act of 1920, or that made with Southern Ireland under the agreement of 1921. It could be saved from the necessity of a disastrous intervention only by the mutual forbearance of Irishmen, who as time went on might possibly see that the interests of their common country would be better served by co-operation in the arts of peace than by fresh attempts to upset settlements, however unsatisfactory, in an impatient effort to realise an ideal.

¹ Early in 1923 the Free State Ministry for Foreign Affairs issued a pamphlet, with maps and statistics, to prove the claim of Southern Ireland not only to Fermanagh and Tyrone, but to large areas in Armagh, Down, and Derry. In the spring Mr. Kevin O'Higgins reasserted in the Dail the claim to the two counties, and the duty of Great Britain to support this claim under the Treaty. It was, however, widely felt that all this was but a concession to popular sentiment, and that President Cosgrave's Government had shown itself too wise and moderate to raise a fresh turmoil in Ireland by pressing this claim. In any case, the issue of a plebiscite in the disputed counties seemed at this time far more doubtful than it would have been a year earlier; for, according to trustworthy reports, the Catholics in the North had become reconciled to their lot, and had no desire to exchange it for the still somewhat speculative blessings of the Free State. In the election campaign of July, however, President Cosgrave and his followers once more put the settlement of the boundary question in the forefront of their programme.

Whatever the private misgivings of British Ministers may have been as to the nature of their handiwork and its ultimate outcome, in public they kept an assured countenance. In one respect, indeed, they had reason to congratulate themselves. For them, as the Lord Chancellor explained, the matter was one not so much of national as of international concern, and from this point of view their policy was at once advertised as a brilliant success. 'These articles of agreement,' said Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons, 'have been published in every land, and no agreement arrived at between two peoples has ever received so enthusiastic and universal a welcome.' The enthusiasm is not difficult to understand. For years past Irish ululations had dinned in the ears of all the world, and Irish intrigue confused the counsels of the nations; and to the politicians of the Dominions and of the United States of America especially, deafened as they were by Sinn Fein propaganda and distracted by the organised pressure of their own Irishry, any settlement was sure to be welcomed with vast relief. As to the probable effect of the settlement in Ireland itself, they knew, and probably cared to know, nothing. So long as experiments with the 'political dynamite of the Anglo-Saxon race' were confined to one small island on the outskirts of Europe, all would be well. The political fever of the Irish might be allowed to burn itself out—as Metternich once said of the Greeks—'beyond the pale of civilisation,' and the world would be free to take no further interest in the matter. Ireland as a full partner in the metropolis of the Empire, though a troublesome one, had at least exacted attention; Ireland as the last and least of the Dominions could hope for little or none. As for the sacrifice of those Irishmen who had stood by the Empire during the great war, politicians at the Antipodes could hardly be expected to feel a compunction not felt by those at home. After all, the sacrifice seemed to be justified by every reason of state. The Irish Question had ceased to be, as Arthur Griffith once described it, 'the most important in the world.' It had become wholly insular. And in achieving this result Great Britain had, as the Prime Minister boasted, gained a reputation for generosity without sacrificing one of her essential interests. The only thing she had

sacrificed was the interests of those in Ireland who had trusted her.

Whether or no, in these circumstances, the treaty was a humiliation for Great Britain is a disputed question, the answer to which depends on the conceptions of national honour held by those who argue it. That it was a humiliation for the Imperial Parliament there can be no question. Never had this august assembly been made to play a sorrier part. The majority in both Houses consisted of 'Unionists'—that is to say, of the party which for thirty years past had denounced the proposals to grant a mild form of Home Rule to Ireland as involving the disintegration of the Empire. Twice the electorate had returned them to power because they believed in the truth of their views and their sincerity in proclaiming them. Now, without Parliament or the people being consulted, the leaders of the Unionist party had entered into a compact to break the United Kingdom in pieces by recognising the sovereign independence of Ireland—for a treaty can only be concluded between sovereign and equal powers—and to substitute for the bond of a common Constitution, not the mild form of 'local autonomy' which was the Gladstonian Home Rule they had rejected, but an agreement for separation which, as Bismarck said of all treaties, would only be valid so long as its terms were reinforced by the interests of the parties to it. Worst of all, in making this compact they had yielded not to argument, but to force. This and its probable consequences were pointed out by Lord Carson, with his accustomed directness, in the House of Lords when the Articles of Agreement were brought up from the Commons. 'They were passed,' he said, 'with a revolver pointed at your head. You know it, and you know you passed it because you were beaten, because you had failed, that the Sinn Fein army in Ireland had beaten you. Why don't you say so? Your Press says so. There may be nothing dishonourable in it, but when we are told that the reason you had to pass these terms of treaty, and the reason that you could not put down crime in Ireland, was because you had neither the men nor the money, let me say that that is an awful confession to make—to tell your Empire, in India and in Egypt, and all over the world, that you have not got the

men, nor the money, nor the pluck, nor the inclination, nor the backing to restore law and order in a country within twenty miles of your own shores.'

That was the brutal truth. For, as Michael Collins pointed out later, the victor is he who holds the field; and in Ireland the field was now occupied by Sinn Féin. He admitted, indeed, that the British Army had not been beaten, could not indeed be beaten with the only weapons available for the Republican forces, and he gave this as his main reason for accepting terms which he did not himself regard as final. 'We had made the enemy's position in this country too uncomfortable,' he said. 'There were too many gloomy street corners in Cork and Dublin; too many ambush positions in the country. But, even so, the enemy was not militarily defeated, and we were not in a position to dictate terms. Therefore, we agreed to a settlement.'¹ But the victory had none the less been complete, more complete than if the Army alone had been beaten. The rolling up of the British forces at Mons in 1914, the sweeping German offensive of March 1918, did not spell a German victory. But where all the science and all the massed battalions of the Central Powers failed, the methods of Sinn Féin succeeded. They did so because they reduced, not the British Army, but the British Government and the British people to that mood of surrender which is the essence of defeat.

The Government did its best to wrap the surrender in a splendid disguise. 'The stage management,' said Lord Carson, 'is one of the most perfect things I ever recollect.' On 14 December 1921 the King proceeded in full state to open the special session of Parliament whose sole business was to register the terms of surrender. Ministers had correctly gauged the qualities of their flock. Never was there such a universal chorus of approval; the voices raised in protest were few and not influential; and a bare two days' debate sufficed to set the seal of the House of Commons on a revolution in the United Kingdom and the Empire of which the consequences were incalculable. The House of Lords, which might have shown somewhat more spirit of independence, was equally amenable. The general impression left on the memory by the debate

¹ Speech at Cork, *cit.* 12 March, 1922.

is no more than that of the bleating of a flock of exalted sheep. Two speeches stand out, however. No one present is likely to forget Lord Carson's impassioned denunciation of those who were scuttling out of Ireland and leaving those who had been loyal to them to a fate which was all too soon to be apparent. 'I speak,' he said, 'I can hardly speak—for all those who, relying on British honour and British justice, have, after giving their best to the service of the State, seen themselves deserted and cast aside without one single sign of recollection or recognition.' The other speech is memorable for another reason—for a question that has never been answered. 'If,' said Lord Buckmaster, 'the change in view is really an act of wisdom, an act of union, an act of healing differences between the nations, why was it not introduced in 1918 after the Armistice?'

Why indeed? If the Government had accepted the verdict of the Irish elections of 1918 and made it the excuse for taking the line which it adopted in 1921, it would have spared Ireland much of the bloodshed and misery, and itself the ignominy, of the years that followed. *The Times* and other organs of public opinion in England were urging this course; and indeed it is difficult to see what objections there were to it that were not equally valid three years later. For the Great War was over; and it was therefore as safe in 1918 as in 1921 to throw over the people in Southern Ireland who had been foolish enough to stand by England in her time of trouble.

CHAPTER XII

THE VICTORS QUARREL

Reception of the Treaty in Ireland—Split in Sinn Fein—Protest and counter-proposals of De Valera—Debates in the Dail—The Treaty passed by a narrow majority—De Valera resigns the Presidency—Election of Arthur Griffith—The Provisional Government established—‘Surrender’ of the Castle—Withdrawal of the forces of order—Cynical abandonment of the loyalists—Ireland under five Governments and no government—The Irish Republican Army supreme—Character of this force—Split in the Army—Republican *pronunciamiento* in Tipperary—Spread of the revolt and of anarchy—The boundary question—Attacks on the North by the I.R.A.—Negotiations between Sir James Craig and Michael Collins—The Clones affair—Bloodshed in Belfast—A joint *liaison* commission set up on the border—Republican demonstration in Dublin—Open breach in Sinn Fein—Meeting of the Ard Fheis—Check to the pro-Treaty section—The elections postponed—General anarchy in the country—Bolshevist activities—Attitude of the Irish Labour Party—The Limerick *coup*—The Army claims a decisive voice—Renewed war on Northern Ireland—The North organises defence—Outrage and retaliation in the Six Counties—Round table conference in London—Truce arranged—The Convention of the I.R.A. in Dublin decides to maintain the Republic—Definite split in the I.R.A.—Rory O’Connor seizes the Four Courts—War resumed in the North—‘Orgy of crime’ in Belfast—I.R.A. proclaimed in Northern Ireland—I.R.A. driven from Pettigo by British troops—Election campaign in the South—Republican demonstrations—Armed conflicts—Abortive attempts at compromise—Withdrawal of British troops suspended—Pact between De Valera and Collins for an ‘agreed’ election—Abortive protest of the British Government—Conference in London—Publication of the Draft Constitution of the Free State—Character of the Constitution—The general election.

WHILE in the world remote from Ireland the news of the signature of the Treaty had been received with general satisfaction, this was by no means the case in Ireland itself. Among the former Unionists of the South, of course, it caused consternation; and even those who, in the supposed interests of peace and of a united Ireland, had supported the idea of an accommodation were aghast at terms which went further than anything they had been led to expect, and left the minority wholly dependent upon the generosity of the victors, not only for any share in political life, but for the security of their very lives and property. In the

Protestant North, where the boundary agreement was looked upon as a deliberate betrayal of the interests of Ulster as guaranteed by the Act of 1920, there was bitter anger and even, in some quarters, wild talk of accepting the principle of independence and coming to terms with the Republicans in the South. It was, however, upon its reception in the Catholic South that the fate of the Treaty depended. It was at once clear that, if it had many supporters, it had also numerous and powerful opponents. Public sentiment indeed, which would have welcomed peace at almost any price, seemed overwhelmingly in its favour; but there was little or no sign of joy or enthusiasm, and in Dublin the news was received with complete apathy. The Nationalist Press, indeed, reported 'universal rejoicing' in the provinces, and published messages from numerous quarters welcoming the Treaty and thanking the plenipotentiaries; in Ireland, however, the organisation of the political *claque* has always been very complete, and these manifestations were not altogether convincing. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic bishops issued from Maynooth a joint pastoral expressing their approval, and all over the country Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, and other public bodies passed resolutions in the same sense.

Whatever interest these demonstrations may have had as showing the trend of popular feeling and the probable outcome of an honest appeal to the popular vote, they had for the moment little practical significance. The immediate decision as to the acceptance or rejection of the Treaty lay with the forces which had made the revolution—that is to say, with the Sinn Féin organisation, the Republican Army, and Dail Eireann; and it was at once clear that in all these bodies there was a violent conflict of opinion. The cleavage, and the principles which had caused it, were revealed on the 8th of December at the close of a meeting of the Dail Cabinet, held at the Dublin Mansion House. 'The terms of this agreement,' said President De Valera in a statement addressed to the 'Gaelic' people, 'are in violent conflict with the wishes of the majority of this nation. . . . I cannot recommend the acceptance of this Treaty either to Dail Eireann or to the country.' He added that he had the support of Cathal Brugha, Minister for Defence, and Austin Stack,

Minister for Home Affairs. Arthur Griffith also issued a statement which defined the attitude of himself and his supporters in clear and statesmanlike language. 'I have signed the Treaty of Peace between Ireland and Great Britain. I believe that the Treaty will lay the foundation of peace and friendship between the two nations. What I have signed I shall stand by, in the belief that the end of the conflict of centuries is at hand.'

Thus was defined the antithesis which underlay all the violent debates in the Dail, which met in the National University on 11 December in order to discuss the Treaty preliminary to its submission for ratification to 'the members elected to the Parliament of Southern Ireland.' The views of Arthur Griffith and his supporters have already been mentioned. The reasons given by De Valera for his attitude of opposition deserve closer examination, since they were to have momentous consequences.

In an appeal issued 'to the people of Ireland,' on the 4th of January 1922, the President passionately urged the rejection of the Treaty. The document is long and verbose; but it states clearly enough the reasons which determined an attitude which to the world at large seemed utterly unreasonable. Put briefly, De Valera's contention was that to accept the Treaty would be dishonest, since there was no real intention of regarding it as final. 'Do not,' he said, 'set the seal of your approval on a settlement that you know cannot be a settlement. Do not for the first time in her history allow Ireland to be put in the wrong as regards England. Do not impair the moral foundation of Ireland's fight for freedom. Do not enter upon a compact which in your hearts you know can never be kept in sincerity and in truth.' A peace of good will, he added, had been set aside and a peace that cannot be a peace shamelessly imposed. The terms of such a 'peace of good will' had been embodied by him in a document (No. 2) submitted to the Dail in secret session before its adjournment on 22 December 1921. These terms did not differ in any vital respects from those embodied in the Treaty; the safeguards for Great Britain were substantially the same; and the only difference which could be regarded by either side as essential was that the King was to be excluded in theory as well as in fact from Ireland.

The Irish Republic, thus purified of all taint of foreign domination, was to conclude a treaty of permanent association with the 'British commonwealth of nations.' The King of Great Britain was to be recognised as the head of this association, and as a token of this recognition the Irish Republic was to make an annual contribution to His Majesty's Civil List.¹ On 4 January, however, the President published another document (No. 3) which showed that in the interval he had modified his views. Document No. 3, though it recognised the King as head of the association of nations 'for the purposes of the association,' contained no oath of allegiance, and there was no longer any mention of a contribution to the Civil List. For the rest, it followed very closely the terms of the Treaty actually signed, with only such slight modifications as were necessitated by the complete elimination of the Crown. To overcome the obvious drawbacks involved in Irishmen and Englishmen no longer having a common citizenship, it was proposed that 'Irish citizens shall not be subject to disabilities from which British citizens are exempt,' and that 'this arrangement shall be reciprocal.'

It is possible to regret that the British Government, having once made up its mind to surrender, did not frankly recognise the Irish Republic on some such terms as these. To have done so would not have exposed the Crown to any greater humiliation than it has suffered, nor Great Britain to any dangers from which the actual treaty preserves her, while Ireland might have been spared the ruin, desolation and bloodshed of another year of fratricidal strife. The die was now cast, however, and—as Arthur Griffith pointed out—for the Dail to reject the Treaty would be to invite Ireland to renew the struggle under far less favourable conditions, since the sympathy of the Dominions and the United States would no longer be with her. To show how slight was the difference between the arrangement under the Treaty and that which President De Valera was prepared to accept, he now published Document No. 2, which was promptly

¹ Instead of the oath prescribed in Article IV of the Treaty, De Valera suggested the following formula: 'I — do swear to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of Ireland and the Treaty of Association of Ireland with the British Commonwealth of Nations, and to recognize the King of Great Britain as the head of the association.'

exposed by the pro-Treaty Press to a merciless fire of ridicule. As the debate proceeded, indeed, it became clear that there was no conflict of ideals between the opponents and supporters of the Treaty, but only a difference of opinion as to how far policy justified a compromise with principle. De Valera and his supporters maintained that such a compromise was not only not honest, but that it would for ever make the application of the principle impossible. The supporters of the Treaty held that it conceded nearly everything for which Sinn Fein had struggled and fought, and that, so far from making the full realisation of its ideal impossible, it brought it a long step nearer.

Round these points of view the Dail talked interminably, and as the debates proceeded there began to sound a note of personal bitterness which had at the outset been absent. To the end the issue was doubtful, for the factions were fairly evenly balanced, and on 6 January the danger of a fatal split seemed so imminent that Michael Collins called for the setting up of a Committee of Public Safety, consisting of representatives of both sides, in the belief that in such a body he would be able to make his will prevail. On the following day, however, a decision was reached. 'Ratify the Treaty, and fight for the Republic afterwards,' Collins cried in the final debate; and the argument decided a sufficient number of waverers. The Treaty was accepted by the narrow majority of 64 to 57.

President De Valera showed no disposition to accept this verdict. At a meeting of the Sinn Fein Executive at the Mansion House on the day following, he declared that the Republic was still in existence. 'We must fight on!' he cried. On the 9th he handed in to the Dail his formal resignation of the Presidency, and a motion to re-elect him was only defeated by two votes (60 to 58). On the 10th Arthur Griffith was elected President, and at once proceeded to appoint a Ministry to act till the Provisional Government was established, and the decision of the country had been taken on the issue of the Free State.¹

¹ The Ministers were: Michael Collins (Finance), Gavan Duffy (Foreign Affairs), Eamon Duggan (Home Affairs and Commerce), W. T. Cosgrave (Local Government), Kevin O'Higgins (Economic Affairs), Richard Mulcahy (Defence), Ernest Blythe (Trade), Joseph MacGrath (Labour), Professor Michael Hayes (Education), Desmond Fitzgerald (Publicity), P. J. Hogan (Agriculture).

On the 14th there was a formal meeting of 'the members elected to the Parliament of Southern Ireland,' for the purpose of ratifying the Treaty. From this Mr. De Valera and his followers abstained, so that it consisted of the majority in the Dail with the addition of the four members for Trinity College. The Treaty was therefore ratified without opposition. On the same day the Provisional Government was set up under the presidency of Michael Collins, the other members being Messrs. William T. Cosgrave, Duggan, Hogan, Finian Lynch, Joseph MacGrath, John McNeill, and Kevin O'Higgins. On the 16th the head of the Provisional Government was able to announce that he had received 'the surrender of the Castle' from Lord FitzAlan, to whom His Majesty sent a telegram of congratulation.

The British Government, without waiting to endow its successor with adequate powers, now proceeded to abdicate its functions in Ireland, to disestablish the administrative services, to abandon the police, and to withdraw its armed forces from the country. By an agreement made by Mr. Lloyd George with Arthur Griffith, this withdrawal was to begin as soon as the Treaty was ratified. Preparations for it had actually begun before, had been checked by the unexpected delay in the action of the Dail, and were now hurriedly resumed. In all history it would be hard to find a more heartless and cynical abandonment. The loyalists of the South, country gentlemen and farmers, had been deprived of their arms—even of their shot-guns—by the Government on the plea of preventing them from falling into the hands of the I.R.A., and these arms had been stored under the charge of the Royal Irish Constabulary, to be restored to their owners whenever the condition of the country should warrant it. By order of the Government these were now handed over to 'the new authorities'—that is to say, to the I.R.A.; and the hapless people who had been foolish enough to believe in the power and will of the British Government to defend their lives and property were left defenceless, with consequences that were presently to appear. Nor was this all. The same Ministers who, a few months ago, had never wearied of describing the Republican Army as a 'band of assassins,' now seemed to regard it as a highly disciplined force, so

thoroughly under the control of 'General Headquarters' in Dublin, that it was safe to hand over to its local units armoured cars, Crossley tenders, machine-guns, and munitions of all sorts. In many cases, where there was no actual handing over, the troops left stores of arms and ammunition, either wholly unguarded for the first band of ruffians to seize, or under the charge of the abandoned and disgusted Constabulary in the police barracks, which came to much the same thing; for the days were past when half-a-dozen R.I.C. men would cheerfully face fearful odds. This carelessness was to cost the Irish Government and people dear.

It is hard to give a true impression of the chaos which resulted from this policy, if policy it can be called. Four Governments now divided the puzzled allegiance of Irishmen. British Ministers acknowledged that, pending the passing of the Act conferring legal powers on the Provisional Government, they were still responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Ireland, though they had ostentatiously deprived themselves of the means of carrying out this responsibility. In Northern Ireland the Government established under the Act of 1920 found the hard problem with which it was faced rendered doubly hard owing to the doubt thrown by the terms of the Treaty on the extent of the area over which it was ultimately to have jurisdiction. In Southern Ireland the Provisional Government, under Michael Collins and a full complement of ministers, held command of the old organisation of the 'Castle'¹—an equivocal position out of which the Republicans, who denounced it as the 'usurpation of a junta' were not slow to make capital—while Dail Eireann, with Mr. Arthur Griffith and a duplicate set of ministers, continued in being and still commanded the dubious allegiance of De Valera and his followers. In addition, the shadowy 'Parliament of Southern Ireland' remained in existence *de jure*.

Meanwhile, whatever Government was supposed to be governing, it soon became clear that effective power, after as before, lay in the hands of the gunmen of the Irish Republican Army. This body was composed of very

¹ On the 14th January the Provisional Government issued a proclamation continuing the functions of existing officials.

heterogeneous elements, shop-boys and farmers' sons for the most part, but with a very large proportion of men of the 'corner-boy' and frankly criminal type. It was without discipline—as the word is understood in regular armies—and without effective organisation.

Its complexion varied from county to county, and from place to place, and nobody knew from day to day what line any particular unit of it would follow. Yet upon this amorphous body the fate of the Treaty and of Ireland depended, and the leaders of both sections of Sinn Féin proceeded to bid for its support. The first success was scored by the opponents of the Treaty. The news of its signature had scarcely reached Clonmel, in County Tipperary, when the local leaders, of whom Dan Breen was the guiding spirit, commandeered motor cars and hurried up to Dublin to concert with De Valera and his lieutenants measures for resistance. Returning at once, presumably with due authorisation, they repudiated the authority of the Provisional Government, and that of General Mulcahy as Chief of the General Staff, and proceeded to set up a republic of their own. Adventurous spirits flocked to the great camp which they established in the fastnesses of the Comeragh Mountains as the centre of their power. For lack of other resources, they revived the old system of 'coyne and livery,' their armed bands—like the galloglasses and kernes of the Irish Kings—scouring the countryside, living at free quarters on the inhabitants, requisitioning food, money and motor cars, and driving away the cattle of gentlemen and farmers who had the temerity to resist payment of their 'assessments.' The British Government, by ordering the immediate surrender to them of all military barracks, had provided them with convenient strongholds, in the courtyards of which they could safely bestow their spoils, while the hasty withdrawal of the troops enabled them to complete their already formidable armaments by raids on stores of munitions left in the police barracks under the care of abandoned and dispirited Royal Irish Constabulary.¹ Thus Tipperary, 'the very lap of the land,' as Edmund

¹ The police barracks at Clonmel, garrisoned by forty R.I.C. men, was 'surprised' on the night of Sunday, 26 February, the Republicans capturing 300 rifles, 3 machine-guns, 200,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, and 100,000 rounds of revolver ammunition.

Spenser called it, became once more, as in his day, 'a privileged place of spoils and stealths, a receptacle to rob the counties about it.' It became also an example of successful Republican resistance. County Kerry, for instance, was soon organised on similar lines by Austin Stack, and presently other counties and districts followed suit. For everywhere in like manner the Government—to quote the bitter comment of a former loyalist—had 'armed the criminal classes.' Soon, throughout the greater part of Southern Ireland, there was neither law, nor magistrate, nor police, nor military rule—nothing but the domination of the man with the gun.

The weakness of the Provisional Government at the outset in dealing with these disorders was due to a variety of causes. To begin with, several weeks passed after its establishment before it was endowed by Act of Parliament with legal authority;¹ it was hampered by uncertainty as to the amount of support it could rely on from the I.R.A. and from the Sinn Fein organisation, in both of which a split now seemed inevitable. A principal reason, however, was undoubtedly the natural reluctance of Michael Collins to proceed to extremities against his old comrades in arms, whose ideals he shared, until every means of conciliation had been exhausted. This attitude was made especially clear in the case of the relations of the Provisional Government with Northern Ireland, which soon became critical. The operations of the I.R.A. in the Six Counties had never wholly ceased, but immediately after the signature of the Treaty they took on a more methodical form, and it began to be suspected that the forces of disorder in the North were working, if not on the instructions, at least with the sympathetic connivance of the new authorities in Dublin. The situation rapidly became worse. On 14 January the British Government had released several hundred rebel internees; of these many went at once to the North; and the Belfast Press noted that that very night Sinn Fein snipers began operations in the notorious Falls

¹ The Bill for transferring powers was published on 10 February. The Free State (Agreement) Bill passed the House of Commons on the 22nd. It did not receive the royal assent till 30 March.

Road district, with the result that the week-end in Belfast was one of riot and bloodshed. More threatening, however, was the fact that considerable Republican forces were concentrated on the border, in County Monaghan, whence frequent raids were made into Tyrone and Fermanagh. Sir James Craig, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, did his best to avert the disastrous conflict that seemed to be impending, and for a moment it looked as though a *modus vivendi* between North and South had been established. On 23 January he met Michael Collins in London, and the papers announced next day that they had succeeded in reaching an agreement. Unfortunately this was only very partially true. It was agreed that the boycott on goods from Ulster imposed by Sinn Féin should be removed, and certain questions of common interest were discussed and disposed of in a friendly spirit. On the most perilous question of all, however—that of the readjustment of the boundary—it was found impossible to come to terms. For Collins to have yielded anything in this matter would have been to have united the whole of Sinn Féin Ireland against him, and he insisted that, under the Treaty, readjustment of the boundary meant the cession to Southern Ireland of the whole of Tyrone and Fermanagh, together with large areas in Derry, Down, and Armagh. This Sir James Craig was equally unable to accept. A further conference, in Dublin on 2 February, had no better result. A compromise on the boundary question was clearly impossible, and on the following day Sir James Craig left for London, where on the 7th he informed the Prime Minister that the Northern Cabinet definitively refused to consider the proposed modification of the boundaries fixed by the Act of 1920.

This disconcerting communication was made on the day of the opening of the new Parliament, and Mr. Lloyd George, in his speech on the Address, adjured the House, amid laughter, not to take this disagreement too tragically. There was, indeed, no reason why it should do so, since the tragedy was to be confined to Ireland. It began the very next day. Columns of I.R.A. from Monaghan invaded Tyrone and Fermanagh, seized a large number of well-to-do Unionists, farmers and others, and carried

them over the border, to be held as hostages. Three days later, on the 11th of February, a yet more serious affair occurred. A party of eighteen Ulster Special Constables, only six of them armed, were on their way from the training camp at Newtownards, County Down, to Enniskillen. The only direct route by rail ran a short way through Free State territory, and involved changing trains at Clones, in Monaghan, a few hundred yards from the border. What happened here is obscure. What is undisputed is that volleys were fired by men in I.R.A. uniform into the carriage in which the constables were seated, four being killed and eight wounded, while the commander of the Republicans was also killed. Five of the constables were carried off as prisoners, the rest managing to escape over the border.

These events roused excitement on both sides of the border to fever heat. On the night of the 12th fighting was renewed in several parts of Belfast and continued for several days, with heavy loss in killed and wounded, the people being roused to fury especially by the hurling of bombs in streets crowded with children. The position, indeed, became so alarming that the British Government decided to take action. The provocative language of Commandant Eoin O'Duffy, the Chief of Staff of the I.R.A., with his talk of 'using the lead' against the recalcitrant North, together with his public justification of the raids into the Six Counties, seemed to fix responsibility upon the Provisional Government, and representations were made to Michael Collins on the subject. In view of the uncertain temper of the Republican Army his position was no easy one; but his influence enabled him to tide over the immediate peril. At his instance the kidnapped 'hostages' were gradually searched out and released, and on the 16th Mr. Churchill was able to announce to the House of Commons that an arrangement had been come to between him and Sir James Craig by which mixed *liaison* commissions were to be charged with the duty of keeping order on both sides of the border. This, of course, merely 'papered over the cracks.'

Meanwhile, while the Free State Agreement Bill was slowly progressing through its various stages in the

Imperial Parliament, the Republican opposition in the South was growing and consolidating its strength. On Sunday, 12 February, a Republican demonstration was held in Sackville Street, Dublin, and was addressed by De Valera and other leaders in impassioned harangues. It was attended by a vast concourse of people, including the members of the Cumann na mBan, which a week before had decided by an overwhelming majority to support the Republic, and by several thousand men of the I.R.A., who marched up in military formation. The majority of those present, however, were obviously only there out of curiosity. On the following day matters came to a crisis. In answer to a cabled protest from the secretary of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic, Collins sent a message in which he accused De Valera of planning a *coup d'état* against the Provisional Government, 'as witness the affair in Cork, where departing British police had their arms seized by De Valera's supporters.' The only object of such an action, he added, could be to destroy the Government and hamper the evacuation of the British forces.

On this same night he informed the Press that he had received notice from London that, in view of the condition of things in both the North and South, the evacuation was to be suspended. The news was received with vast relief in Dublin and elsewhere. It represented, however, a set-back for the supporters of the Treaty; and Collins announced his intention of going to London in order to see to the fulfilment of the provisions of the Treaty with regard to evacuation, at the same time declaring that the Provisional Government was 'prepared to deal with any similar situation to that created by the Curragh Mutiny'—a plain intimation that the Republican Army was hopelessly divided.

On Wednesday the 15th Collins had a conference with Winston Churchill, and expressed himself wholly pleased with the outcome. In the House of Commons the Colonial Secretary explained the situation to his own satisfaction. The Provisional Government was hampered in dealing with the disorders in Ireland because it had not yet been enabled 'to display the insignia of lawful power,' and meanwhile the Imperial Government

admitted its responsibility for the maintenance of order. 'The Irish signatories of the Treaty, however, held the view that the Irish Republic was set up at the last election, and that it would only be converted into an Irish Free State by the decision of the people. They were determined to stand by the Treaty, and to use their utmost influence to secure the adhesion of the people to the Treaty. By achieving that they would disestablish, finally, the Irish Republic.' 'The sooner an election comes,' he said, 'the better.' It was soon clear, however, that this last wish was not destined to be quickly fulfilled. The whole matter was to be discussed at the meeting of the Ard Fheis of the Sinn Fein organisation fixed for the 21st in Dublin, and Mr. Churchill's unhappy phrase about finally disestablishing the Irish Republic had supplied the opponents of the Treaty with a fresh and welcome text. It was by no means certain which way the voting would go.

It went decisively neither way. The proposal that the delegates should vote, not by ballot, but 'courageously, like men,' was carried in spite of the opposition of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins; and this, in view of the number of ardent Republican gunmen present, meant that there was not likely to be a majority for the Treaty. The pro-Treaty leaders at once saw the necessity for a temporising policy, and the debate was switched off into an edifying series of appeals for unity, the meeting responding enthusiastically to Father Gaynor's appeal for 'unity without frills.' It was unanimously decided to adjourn the meeting, pending a conference of the leaders on both sides with a view to arriving at an accommodation. The terms of the agreement reached were announced at the adjourned meeting on the following day, the 22nd. No elections were to take place for three months, and at these elections not only the Treaty, but also the Free State Constitution based upon it, was to be submitted to the people. Meanwhile, Dail Eireann was to continue to function in all departments, just as before the Treaty, and the Cabinet was to continue to hold office in spite of any hostile vote. The Standing Committee of the Sinn Fein organisation, on which there was a pro-Treaty majority, was to cease to function. These proposals

were carried unanimously, and the Ard Fheis adjourned without another word.¹

This decision of the Sinn Fein body, which was endorsed by Dail Eireann just before its adjournment on 2 March, caused something like consternation among British Ministers, who had confidently expected that the Treaty would at once be laid before the Irish electors and accepted by them with enthusiasm. Now everything seemed once more in the melting-pot, and Messrs. Collins and Griffith were invited to London to explain matters. Apparently the explanations were satisfactory; for the Free State (Agreement) Bill was proceeded with, and on 2 March, in Committee of the House of Commons, Mr. Churchill emphasised the fact that the Government accepted Messrs. Griffith and Collins as the spokesmen of the whole of Ireland.² Events in Ireland itself, indeed, hardly bore out this assumption. Apart from Republican opposition in the Dail, where the unholy alliance between the President and the Provisional Government was hotly denounced, it was clear that in the country at large the elements opposed to the Treaty were becoming more and more aggressive, and that they were prepared to use against the Provisional Government the same methods of warfare as had been used successfully against the British. Throughout this time, indeed, outrages of every kind had never ceased. Ex-soldiers, ex-officers and men of the R.I.C., and generally people against whom others had a grudge, were murdered day by day, and there was no authority anywhere to bring the criminals to justice. The 'Reds,' too, seized their opportunity. So early as 1918 foreign Communists—notably Polish and Russian Jews from Glasgow—had been filtering into both Northern and Southern Ireland in considerable numbers, and committees of the Third International, in touch with Moscow, were established in the principal cities. With the withdrawal of the British forces and the general collapse of administrative order, these now began to show an ominous activity. 'Soviets' sprang

¹ There is a vivid report of the meeting in *The Republic of Ireland* for 28 Feb. 1922. The writer rightly regards its outcome as a triumph for De Valera.

² This was, of course, hotly resented by the Ulster Unionists, who regarded it as an insult.

up like mushrooms, especially in the countryside, where the labourers here and there seized the creameries and proceeded to carve up grazing farms and gentlemen's demesnes into holdings for themselves under the red flag.¹ Nor was it only the landless labourers, for whom some excuse could be pleaded, who took part in the scramble for other people's property. Small farmers, eager to extend their holdings, removed their neighbours' landmarks on their own account, or, as in the case of the Toovahara Soviet in East Clare, joined the labourers in expelling the tenant proprietors from a number of farms, which they used as grazing ranches, collecting the rates and pocketing the profits.² Their Communism was purely opportunist; principles, Marxian or other, they had none. These activities were first effectively dealt with by General Michael Brennan, commanding the National troops in the Limerick district. This officer, one of the most competent in the service of the Free State, after crushing the Republican bands in Limerick, had turned his attention to East Clare, which he speedily reduced to order.³ The agrarian Soviets he discouraged by a simple method, which the Free State Government afterwards adopted in similar cases. He sent soldiers to round up the intruding cattle, which were driven to market and sold, the proceeds being given as compensation to the owners of the land. In the case of the creameries, or of factories and other industrial enterprises in the cities, the experiments in extemporised Communism rapidly collapsed, if only because producers would not supply them with raw materials. The movement among the landless labourers, on the other hand, was more serious, and by the early summer of 1923 had developed, especially in Waterford and Wexford, into something like a war between them and the farmers. And in these troubled waters the Communists assiduously stirred and fished, painting the ideal happiness enjoyed by the

¹ The local correspondents of *The Voice of Labour*, the official organ of the Transport Workers' Union, reported such cases with enthusiasm.

² See *The Freeman's Journal*, 3 May 1923.

³ He used the regular troops only against the organised forces of the Irregulars. For the purpose of dealing with the local wreckers working in concert with the Republican 'flying columns,' he organised a vigilance force of respectable farmers and the like, who were unarmed but effective.

labourers and peasants under the Government of Soviet Russia, and exhorting the workers to 'keep the red flag flying.'¹ It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Republican idealists who followed De Valera were but the unconscious tools of the tyrants of Moscow, and that Bolshevik brains were responsible for the campaign of organised destruction which later attended the revolt of the Irregulars and by the spring of 1923 had left Ireland impoverished, if not ruined.

With all this organised Irish Labour, though its organs encouraged the movement among the labourers, had officially nothing to do, having from the first ostensibly declared for peaceful methods and against violence. At a special congress of delegates of the Irish Labour Party, held in Dublin on 21 February, it was decided by a considerable majority to put forward Labour candidates at the forthcoming elections. The Report of the National Executive, which was adopted, pointed out in reference to the Treaty that 'the terms of peace were the best that could be obtained in the circumstances.' 'Differences have arisen,' it said, 'among the dominant party (Sinn Fein) in respect to the course to be pursued towards the goal of sovereign independence which both sections still aspire to.' The ideal commonwealth—the Republic based upon co-operative labour and service—not upon property and capital—was not to be attained through either party

¹ *The Voice of Labour* published on 11 November 1922 a message to the 'workers of Russia' congratulating them on the fifth anniversary of the revolution of November, together with an 'interview' in which Krassin painted in glowing colours the lot of the peasantry under the Soviet Government. *The Workers' Republic*, for the same date, printed a manifesto of which the following is a characteristic extract: 'November 7th was the Anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Five years ago the Russian peasants, workers and soldiers, under the leadership of the Russian Communist Party—the Bolsheviks—seized the land, industries, and machinery of government in Russia to use them for the benefit of their own class. And they have kept possession of them. . . . Neither pestilence nor famine nor civil war, all fomented by foreign capital, has prevented the Russian workers from fighting, dying or living for the Russian Workers' Republic. The Russian Communist Party was able to seize power because it knew how to carry out its programme which promised land to the peasants, control of industry to the town workers, and peace, when the freedom of Russia was won, to the soldiers. . . . We in Ireland may learn much from the Russian revolutionaries. We must also help them to carry on the struggle. We can do this by striking every blow we can at the British Empire, the greatest enemy of Soviet Russia and one of the bulwarks of world capitalism.'

in the present Dail. But a new legislature was to be elected, and it was the duty of the Labour Party to make use of whatever instrument and power the political struggle had placed in its hands. 'We ought to work the new government machine,' said the Report, 'if it is established, even if it is not built according to our design, provided it can be adapted for turning out the products we require.' In short, Labour declared for constitutional methods, denouncing 'the prevalence in many places of the militaristic spirit; the assumption widely held that the soldier is above the law, the master, not the servant, of the civil powers.'¹

There was certainly no sign that the militaristic spirit, thus defined, was subsiding in Ireland. It asserted itself ominously at Limerick on 5 March, when the anti-Treaty section of the I.R.A. seized the military barracks and the principal buildings of the city, imprisoned the Free State commandant and the *liaison* officer sent to effect an accommodation, and posted up proclamations denouncing the insidious attempts to subvert the Republic. Although the affair did not lead to bloodshed, and was patched up by agreement on the 10th, it was of importance as the first conspicuous indication of a serious revolt of sections of the I.R.A. against the authority of General Headquarters. It had an even more sinister significance, which was revealed in the manifesto issued by Commandant Thomas Barry,² the leader of the anti-Treaty invaders, in justification of the *coup*. His grievance was precisely that the military had been treated as the servants, not as the masters, of the civil powers. He complained that the Republican Army had not been consulted as to the Treaty. This was indeed, in the circumstances of the time, a serious omission, and under the terms of the accommodation reached it was to be rectified by summoning a convention of the I.R.A. for this purpose. This was at least a recognition of the realities of the situation.

¹ *The Voice of Labour*, New Ser., vol. iv. No. 19, 25 Feb. 1922. On p. 2 is an account of the establishment of a 'farm soviet,' labourers on strike entering on the land and staking out 15 acre holdings with red flags.

² An ex-officer in the British army, who had gained experience in guerilla warfare while fighting the Bolsheviks in Northern Russia. He was later conspicuous as the commander of the Irregulars in the Cork district.

The leaders might, and did, pour out impassioned appeals from rival platforms to curious crowds ; but the decision for or against any settlement lay with the men with the guns ; and they knew it.

In Southern Ireland the time had not yet come for them to take a strong line, for the simple reason that their ranks were divided and nobody knew on which side the superiority of force lay. There was loud talk of an appeal to arms to save the Republic. ' We shall have to wade through the blood of the soldiers of the Irish Government,' cried De Valera at Thurles, ' and perhaps through that of some of the members of the Irish Government, to get our freedom.' No idle threat, as the sequel proved, but as yet premature. The intestine strife, however, did not prevent the glorious struggle being continued in Northern Ireland. Gunmen for whom there was no immediate use in the South were drafted, in the guise of peaceful travellers, over the border into the Six Counties, with instructions to commit outrages, the object being to incite the Orangemen to acts of retaliation and possibly to an invasion of Free State territory, which could easily be represented to the credulous British public as acts of wanton aggression. The Provisional Government, while it disapproved this policy, was powerless to prevent it, and in view of the uncertain temper of its soldiery could not even make any public protest against it.

By the middle of March North and South were, to all intents and purposes, at open war, and the northern Protestants noted with bitterness that the men attacking them were armed with British weapons.¹ In view of the imminence of the threat, the constant raids, the perpetual sniping over the border,² and the organised outrages in Belfast and elsewhere, it became necessary to organise counter-measures. Already, since the Clones affair, the border had been turned into an armed camp, the roads between the Free State and the Six Counties being blocked and entrenched. In these circumstances Sir Henry

¹ On 16 March a party of I.R.A. raiding into Northern Ireland were captured, and with them a Crossly tender and British rifles and machine-guns.

² It was reported, e.g., from Aughnacloy on the 25th that I.R.A. snipers were keeping the border swept from a dozen quarters, the Ulster Specials making no reply.

Wilson was invited by the Northern Government to take command of its forces, and on the 20th he submitted to Sir James Craig a plan for suppressing crime in the North. He at once set to work also to organise the defence of Ulster. The Constabulary was reorganised in three divisions. The A Division, which was equivalent to the old R.I.C., consisted of picked men, who were paid; the B Division was formed of volunteers; the C Division comprised older men to be held in reserve for extreme emergencies. Sir Henry Wilson had also pointed out the necessity 'to take increased powers for rapid and drastic action against the illegal importation and carrying of arms, bombs, etc.' This advice was followed, the Northern Parliament passing a Bill, on the lines of the Restoration of Order (Ireland) Act, which set up a special court for the trial of offences against order, and prescribed the death penalty for the throwing of bombs and flogging for the carrying of arms without authority.

These measures were to have their effect in time; but meanwhile matters went from bad to worse. On the 23rd there was what the papers described as 'intensive war' in Belfast. Cavour Street, the 'boundary area' of the Sinn Fein quarter, was swept by snipers firing from this quarter, seven people being killed in this street alone; bombs were thrown into tram-cars crowded with Protestant workers on their way to or from the shipyards; and isolated special constables were shot down in cold blood. It is impossible to give the tale of the outrages, which were occurring all over the country.¹ Unfortunately, they produced the effect intended by their authors. As in the days of the Peep-o'-Day Boys and the Defenders, the secret terrorist organisation on one side led to the forming of a similar organisation on the other, and presently the Sinn Fein gunmen found themselves opposed by an underground society of Protestant gunmen equally

¹ A fair impression may be given by merely quoting the headlines from the weekly edition of the *Irish Times* for 25 March. They are: *Incendiarism and Murder in the North*; *Shocking Atrocities in Belfast*; *Pressmen under Fire in No-Man's-Land*; *Twelve Men with Rifles murder an Orangeman*; *County Derry Special Murdered*; *Tyrone Murder*; *Another Tyrone Murder*; *Mills and Farm Buildings Destroyed*; *Women given Five Minutes to Clear Out* (this referred to the burning of a Protestant farmer's house); *Bridge Destroyed*; *Hibernian Hall Burned* (apparently by Republicans); *Barrack Captured*; *Orgy of Murder in Belfast*.

ruthless.¹ There were acts of fierce retaliation which Sinn Fein at once proceeded to exploit for its own ends. De Valera, as President of the Sinn Fein organisation, summoned a special meeting of the Standing Committee to consider what steps should be taken in view of 'the continued campaign of murder of Catholics in the north-eastern counties.' Michael Collins had already protested to the British Government against the speech in which Sir James Craig introduced the special legislation for the suppression of crime. He said that it amounted to a threat of torture and tyranny to the Roman Catholic population of 'the six northern counties.' These utterances had their effect later. They gave a plausible excuse to the ruffians who were presently to begin burning the houses and otherwise maltreating the Protestants in the South.

Hitherto, as Winston Churchill complacently remarked at Northampton on the 25th, the Unionists in the South 'in the great majority of cases' had not been made the subject of any wrongful treatment, 'and this at a time when we are withdrawing our soldiers and disbanding our police, and when the new Government in power has not even yet got legal sanction for its authority.' It was by this time clear, however, even to the British Government, that if a war of religions developed in the North it would be likely to spread to the South, with consequences which it might be difficult to explain away for those who admitted that they were still responsible for the maintenance of order in Ireland. They decided therefore to make an effort to produce a *modus vivendi* between the two parts of the country, and on the 24th, at the invitation of Mr. Churchill, Sir James Craig and Michael Collins went to London. Here, on the 29th, a 'round table' conference was held, as the result of which a 'peace' agreement was signed on the 30th, the day on which the royal assent was given to the Free State Bill. By this agreement it was arranged that I.R.A. activity in

¹ The Nationalist Press noted especially attacks on Catholic public-houses and the murder of 'inoffensive' barmen. It was a common practice for the Sinn Fein gunmen to take service as bar tenders, which not only served to camouflage them, but gave them exceptional opportunities for gaining information. Many of the Protestant gunmen were caught and flogged by the Northern Government.

Northern Ireland was to cease; that the Belfast police were to be reorganised, with a view to the representation and safeguarding of the Catholic population; and that, within a month of the passing of the Bill confirming the Constitution of the Free State, the signatories of the agreement were to meet, with a view to ascertaining whether means could be devised for securing the unity of Ireland or, failing that, whether agreement could be reached on the boundary question otherwise than by recourse to the Boundary Commission. In order to remove what was undoubtedly one of the main causes of the troubles in Belfast, the British Government undertook to submit to Parliament a vote not exceeding £500,000 to be expended on relief works in the city, one-third of this amount to go to Roman Catholics and two-thirds to Protestants. The Northern Government, for its part, promised to use every effort for the restoration of the Roman Catholics who had been expelled from the shipyards,¹ or, should this prove impracticable owing to the actual trade depression, to give them employment on relief works 'so far as the one-third limit will allow.'²

Had the Provisional Government, which was now clothed with legal authority, been able to make its will prevail, this agreement might have brought the desired peace. Unhappily, events in Ireland during the days preceding the conference had clearly shown that a powerful section of the Republican Army had no intention of submitting to the Treaty or to the Government established by the Treaty. A convention of the I.R.A. summoned to meet in Dublin on 26 March was forbidden by President Griffith, in the name of the Dail, as a menace to the supremacy of the civil power. On the 22nd, in a Press interview, Roderick O'Connor, who claimed to speak for eighty per cent. of the Republican Army, declared that the meeting would be held; that the Army

¹ The places of the Protestant shipyard workers who had gone to the front had been largely filled by Roman Catholics from the South. These men, who brought their Sinn Féin opinions with them and flaunted them aggressively, made themselves intolerable to their Protestant fellow-workmen. It was not, however, till the latter were threatened and, on occasion, attacked that they rose *en masse* and expelled the Catholics, not because of their religion, but because of their attitude and behaviour.

² Text in *Irish Times* (weekly edition), 1 April 1922.

had been 'let down' by having to swear an oath of allegiance to the Dail as well as to the Republic; that the undertaking given by the Minister of Defence had been broken by the attempt to enlist members of the I.R.A.—a purely voluntary body—in the new mercenary army of the Free State; and that the object of the convention would be to restore the old constitution of the Irish Volunteers, to reaffirm the allegiance of the army to the Republic, and to appoint an Executive which would have complete control over it. On the same day the Minister of Defence, Richard Mulcahy, announced that if the convention were held, it would be held in defiance of the orders of General Headquarters, and that it would represent, not the Army as a whole, but only a section. Next day he further announced that any officer or man attending the convention would thereby sever his connection with the I.R.A. This he said would break 'definitely to some extent' the solidarity and the organisation of the Army, which it had been his anxious study to preserve, 'but,' he added characteristically, 'it does not, and must not, break to any degree the brotherhood of those who in the past have worked and borne responsibility together.'

The attitude taken up by the Republican stalwarts was more uncompromising. On the 25th of March, the day before the convention, they seized the Orange Hall and the Fowler Memorial Hall in Sackville Street, together with the Fish Market, and put them in a state of defence. On the 26th the convention was duly held. It decided to confirm the allegiance of the Army of the Republic, to maintain it as the Army of the Republic under an Executive Council of sixteen members, and to enforce a drastic boycott of Belfast. Clearly the pretence of solidarity could no longer be maintained, and on the same day Michael Collins, speaking at Waterford, called on De Valera to define his views. 'Mr. De Valera,' he said, 'must publicly dissociate himself from the utterances of the former Ministers of Defence (Cathal Brugha) and Home Affairs (Austin Stack), and from such mutinous views as those expressed by Commandant Roderick O'Connor.' The ex-President, to do him justice, had defined his views clearly and often enough, and they did

not make for peace. From his point of view, indeed, the situation seemed full of hope. On the same day that the peace agreement was signed in London it was announced that the Republicans, already in control of many counties in the South and West, had gained command of Donegal, where they had expelled the Free State troops from the barracks and were busy commandeering motor cars and supplies generally. In Cork harbour they captured a British vessel laden with arms, which the naval authorities had confidently sent to sea without any adequate guard. In Dublin they presently, in addition to the buildings already occupied, seized and sand-bagged the Kildare Street Club and, as a crowning achievement, the Four Courts—the central seat of the now somewhat bedraggled majesty of law, which was turned into a fortress and became, under the command of ‘Rory’ O’Connor, the rival to the Free State Headquarters established in Beggar’s Bush Barracks.

In these circumstances it was clear that there was little chance of the peace agreement signed in London being made effective. On the very day after the signature, indeed, conditions in Belfast became worse than ever. On the night of the 31st of March there were great incendiary fires in various quarters, while a devilish outrage led to a week-end of bloodshed. A band of men entered the cottage of an Orangeman named Donnelly, and hurled a bomb into the room where he was sitting with his family. A baby boy of two was killed, while the father and a small boy and girl were horribly mutilated. The wife, who had an infant in her arms, was unhurt, but the miscreants actually emptied their revolvers at her after the explosion. This outrage roused the Protestants to fury, and a mob invaded the Catholic quarter, wrecking and murdering. The arrival of police, and of soldiers with armoured cars, at last restored order. It was long, however, before the North settled down to normal conditions; for, though no one doubted that Michael Collins had signed the peace agreement in good faith, it was soon clear that the Provisional Government lacked the power to carry it out. In short, the raids and the outrages continued, more or less intermittently, during the next three months. It is impossible to give here more than a general impression

of this condition of things. Every day brought its tale of murder or wanton destruction, which reached their height during the second and third weeks in May, when Belfast again became—to use the language of the Press—the scene of ‘a terrible orgy of crime.’ These crimes, moreover, gave evidence of increasing organisation, and it was suspected that they were in part the work of Bolshevik agencies. But, although these influences were undoubtedly at work in the North as well as in the South, the ‘war’ in Ulster was clearly part of the policy of the revolting section of the I.R.A., a policy which it was the easier to pursue since in doing so it was sure of the sympathy of the rest. In the main this ‘war’ took very much the same character as that which was being waged in the South, where ex-soldiers, ex-R.I.C. constables, Protestants, and obnoxious people generally continued to be done to death in considerable numbers.¹ On the 20th of May, however, there was a fresh development, ominous of an activity which during the coming months was to carry a trail of fire from end to end of Ireland. Bands of I.R.A. in motor cars scoured the counties of Down and Antrim, burned Shanes Castle, the seat of Lord O’Neill, father of the speaker of the Northern Parliament, together with four other mansions and country houses, and devastated Ballymena and the surrounding district. Clearly the servants of the Northern Government were to be treated as the servants of the Union Government had been treated, namely, as traitors. The lesson was emphasised next day by the murder, in a crowded street in Belfast, of Mr. Twaddell, a member of the Northern Parliament and of the Belfast Corporation. It was clear there was no peace, and on the 24th, Sir James Craig proclaimed the I.R.A. in Northern Ireland. As for the boundary question, that too, it appeared, was to be settled by force of arms, the Republican Army establishing itself in the village of Pettigo and the neighbourhood as far as Belleek in Fermanagh, on ground the greater part of which lay in the territory of Northern Ireland. It was no wonder that Sir James Craig, speaking at Liverpool on 25 May, declared

¹ The murders during April included those of three leading Protestants at Dunmanway, County Cork, on the night of the 26th, and five more on that of the 27th. *Irish Times* (weekly edition), 29 April 1922, p. 2.

that 'Mr. De Valera had Mr. Collins in his pocket.' It was no wonder that he added bitterly that 'the Government had miscalculated every single element that went to make the Irish situation.'¹

The Government, indeed, showed signs of realising the seriousness of the position. It had borne with Christian meekness the seizure by the recalcitrant I.R.A. of one of its ships laden with arms and the kidnapping later of several of its officers. The violation of the border of Northern Ireland, which was also now that of the United Kingdom, was more than even its feebleness could stomach. Since the Provisional Government was not in a position to order the evacuation of the occupied territory, even had it desired to do so, British troops were ordered to clear it of the I.R.A., and on 4 June a force with field guns took the initiative, converging on Belleek from both the northern and southern shores of Lough Erne. While they were still in Northern territory the Republicans opened fire upon them and one British soldier was killed. The officer in command thereupon ordered the use of artillery, more with the object of scaring than of hurting the 'enemy.' Twenty-two high explosive shells sprinkled over the country side sufficed; the I.R.A. recrossed the border, and the whole of the Belleek-Pettigo triangle was restored to the Northern Government. The occupation of Pettigo by British troops, which followed, was protested against by the Provisional Government on the ground that only one street of the village was in Fermanagh; but the protest was for the moment ignored for military reasons. The affair had a wholesome effect, if only as showing that the British Government was not indefinitely malleable. It was not this, however, which gave peace to the North. This came with the withdrawal *en masse* of the gunmen, partly owing to the self-respect which made them unwilling to face the cat-o'-nine-tails, partly owing to the outbreak of the civil war in the South, which promised to give them equally congenial and much less perilous occupation elsewhere. From July onwards the Six Counties quickly settled down into normal conditions, even the Sinn Féin element falling

¹ He added: 'They have given in to murder what they had refused to argument. They have made, at the point of the revolver, what they must know in their hearts is a cowardly and treacherous surrender.'

comparatively silent as the Catholics discovered that the Government intended to keep its promise to make no discrimination between the creeds.¹

Meanwhile things were rapidly moving towards a crisis in the South. The month of April had been mainly occupied by manœuvres for position by the two parties and abortive efforts to secure an accommodation between them. There was still a show of common action, and on the 2nd the Standing Committee of Sinn Féin, on which both parties were represented, issued a joint pronouncement in favour of free speech at the elections. In Ireland, of course, this might have been of epoch-making importance, had it been more than a move in the party game. Point, indeed, was given to it by the fact that on the very same day Michael Collins was refused a hearing at Castlebar, his meeting being 'proclaimed' and broken up by I.R.A. under the command of officers in uniform. De Valera, speaking on the same day, had better fortune. At Dundalk, where he was welcomed by the local Volunteers, he declared that there was but one Government in Ireland—that of the Republic, and that he and his followers would make any other government impossible both in the South and North. At Drogheda he developed his ideas. 'The evacuation of the British forces,' he said, 'is a snare. There is no reality in it as long as Britain has her navy round the Irish shores. We made it impossible for the British Government to rule Ireland, and we can also make it impossible for an Irish Government working under British authority to rule Ireland.' Force was given to these remarks on the same day by a great parade of the Dublin brigade of the I.R.A. in favour of the Republic, at which over 3000 Volunteers were present, and were addressed by Commandant Rory O'Connor and others. The only points of historical interest in these speeches—which followed the usual models—were the suggestion that the I.R.A. in Ulster was being disbanded and that the same fate would next fall on the I.R.A. in the South, and the attacks on the Minister of Defence for compassing

¹ It was characteristic that wherever the Nationalists obtained a majority on local bodies (county councils, etc.) they took the oath of allegiance as required by law. When they were in a minority they refused to do so, and withdrew. The majority, of course, had the control of all patronage.

this by the mean device of bribing the men to join the Free State Army. De Valera was making the same accusation at Drogheda at the same time, adding, 'there is neither a Free State nor a Free State Army—only the Republic and the I.R.A.' The suggestion happened to be true. The only hope for the Provisional Government now lay in the creation of an army, well armed and as well disciplined as possible, which should be unequivocally at its disposal. Arms and equipment they would obtain by arrangement with the British Government; men they obtained in plenty by the offer of high pay and exceptional conditions. In the minds of simple men, were they never so Republican, the indeterminate difference between Saorstát Éireann and Poblacht na h-Eireann was not likely to outweigh obvious material advantages; and, in the event, the Republican stalwarts were beaten not so much perhaps by fighting as by the absorption of the I.R.A. into the well-paid ranks of the National Army.¹

Signs of the approaching conflict multiplied. On 9 April an attempt was made to wreck the train in which Michael Collins was travelling. On the 10th the adjourned convention of the I.R.A. met and appointed a permanent Army Executive in opposition to General Headquarters. Two days later, at the instance of Dr. Byrne, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, a fresh effort was made to reach an understanding, Collins, De Valera, Griffith, and Cathal Brugha accepting his invitation to a conference at the Mansion House. It met first on the 15th, but there was little sign of any satisfactory outcome. De Valera did not modify his language in public, and on the 17th—the anniversary of the Easter Monday rebellion—he issued an address to the Republic in which he called on the young men and women of Ireland to stand fast, as the goal was in sight. The peace conference was adjourned, and yet again adjourned, three Labour representatives being added on the 27th. But fighting had meanwhile begun between the 'rival sections of the I.R.A.' There was a tussle at Athlone, in the course of which the Free State General Adamson was killed, and on the 27th a more serious

¹ In the spring of 1923, when the fighting practically ceased, this army numbered 50,000 officers and men, each man costing the country £280 a year.

affray at Mullingar, which resulted in the death of two men and the wounding of several others. In general, however, 'battles' between the rival forces, now and for some time to come, were more dangerous to non-combatants in the neighbourhood than to the warriors themselves, who were only too glad to remember General Mulcahy's adjuration not to forget their common brotherhood, and resented it as a personal outrage if the other side took aim at them.¹ Such was the carefully staged battle at Kilkenny on 2 May, when 'Irregulars'² occupied Kilkenny Castle, the seat of the Marquess of Ormonde, withstood a siege conducted with rifles and revolvers, and presently surrendered, after a gallant defence, in the course of which neither side suffered any casualties and the only damage done was to the windows, panelling, pictures, and valuable china in the mansion. More serious than these mock heroics was the fact that in County Tipperary railway communication was now wholly interrupted, and that it was becoming more and more difficult for the centre of government to keep in touch with the south.

The war of words also continued. On 28 April there were stormy scenes in the Dail, where De Valera accused President Griffith of having 'flouted the Dail' and of being solely responsible for the actual condition of Ireland. A heated debate resulted, in the course of which President Griffith, who spoke with unusual bitterness, declared that he was 'not going to be intimidated by any gunman here.' On the following day the Dail, 'owing to the grave state of the country,' decided to remain in session.

The state of the country was indeed grave enough. The conditions in the North have already been sketched.

¹ See, e.g., the amusing story of the battle at Foxrock told by Sir Henry Robinson in his *Memories*.

² The rival sections of the I.R.A. were not yet clearly differentiated, and a correct nomenclature is, throughout, difficult to arrive at. The revolting section called themselves either simply the I.R.A., as representing the original Volunteer organisation, or 'Republicans.' This was resented by General Headquarters, who felt themselves to be the legitimate heirs of the Volunteers and in sentiment were equally republican. Officially, then, the opposition forces were named 'Irregulars,' to distinguish them from the regular National Army in course of formation. But this term was resented by the other side, and those who employed it were threatened with dire consequences. The Press, in the end, compromised by referring to them neither as 'rebels' nor 'Republicans' nor 'Irregulars,' but simply as 'armed men.'

Those in the South were rapidly becoming far worse. At the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, held on 9 May in Dublin, the Primate spoke of 'the veritable nightmare of violence and bloodshed which has been in existence for some time in parts of the country.' In the South the violence was mainly directed against Protestants, bands of I.R.A.—or ruffians masquerading as such—murdering, pillaging, or seizing farms and country houses on the pretext of 'maintaining the victims of the Orange gunmen, who are homeless and starving.'¹ The British Government, now that the Provisional Government was duly elected with 'legal authority,' disclaimed all responsibility; and since the Provisional Government—though, as Sir Hamar Greenwood said, it was 'doing its best under very difficult circumstances'—had as yet little or no effective power, it was clear now that the unhappy people were faced with a period of 'red ruin and the breaking-up of laws.'

The Dail itself was fully alive to the seriousness of the situation, and so were many of the officers of the I.R.A. A group of the latter approached the Ministers with a proposal for a compromise, basing their intervention on the 'pressing need for the unity of the forces which had worked together for the past six years,' and on the fact that 'practically the whole country wants peace and order.' 'Recognising,' the memorial ran, 'that independence has been gained, and that the majority of the Dail has accepted the Treaty as the vehicle of the advantages of independence, we are of opinion that a contested election would lead to civil strife, which might result in the dissipation of those advantages.' They therefore proposed (a) that the election should be an 'agreed' one between the two parties, and (b) that it should be followed by a Coalition Government which would have the confidence of the whole country. On the 3rd of May a motion was carried in the Dail for the appointment of a Committee, to consist of representatives of the rival factions in the Dail and the I.R.A., in order to try to reach an accom-

¹ Woodlawn, Lord Ashtown's seat in County Galway, was thus seized on 27 April. Woodroof, Captain Perry's house in Tipperary (afterwards burned) was also thus seized. In County Mayo Captain Newsham's mansion at Ballycastle, with 500 acres of land, was seized 'to be worked for the benefit of the Belfast refugees.' There were many other cases.

modation. 'I have said,' cried Michael Collins in the course of the debate, 'that the Treaty is a step towards a Republic. I do not withdraw one atom from any statement I have made about the Treaty.' It was soon clear that the Republicans were equally unwilling to withdraw. The Committee, indeed, met at the Mansion House on the 4th, and as its first outcome a formal truce was declared till the 8th, the proclamation being signed by Eoin O'Duffy on behalf of General Headquarters, and Liam Lynch on behalf of the Four Courts Executive. It was soon clear, however, that no accommodation could be reached. To the proposal put forward by the pro-Treaty representatives, which was practically identical with the original suggestion of the group of officers, the Republicans replied by proposing that, with a few exceptions, the members of the actual Dail should be re-elected; that the President and Council should be the sole executive authority in Ireland (the Provisional Government becoming a mere commission for the transfer of powers); that an I.R.A. convention should be held, to consist solely of the delegates to the convention banned by the Government; and that this convention should elect the Minister for Defence and an Army Council, which was to have sole control of the army. This meant the end of the negotiations, since the Republicans refused to recognise the Treaty in any shape or form, and no Government could consent to what was virtually a military dictatorship. The failure was announced to the Dail by the Speaker on the 10th.

In spite of this ominous condition of things, the British Government continued the process of transferring power. On 16 May the great fixed camp at the Curragh was handed over to the troops of the Provisional Government, and on the following day these also occupied Portobello Barracks in Dublin, to which the Headquarters Staff was presently transferred. The withdrawal of the British troops *en masse* from the country ceased, however, and the remaining regiments were concentrated in the Phoenix Park and neighbouring barracks, where they remained until the final establishment of the Free State Government. British Ministers had, indeed, in spite of the continued confidence of their language, reason for misgiving. The appeal to the Irish people, on which they had reckoned, had been

postponed; presently it appeared that there was to be no genuine appeal at all. The conference between the rival sections of Sinn Fein had broken down; but the conversations were continued in private, and on the 26th it was announced that an agreement had been come to between Michael Collins and De Valera. According to the terms of this pact, the two sections of Sinn Fein were, through its organisation, to put forward at the coming elections a National Coalition Panel, representing both parties in the Dail and in the Sinn Fein Organisation, the number for each party being their present strength in the Dail. Constituencies in which an election was not held were to continue to be represented by their present deputies. After the election the Executive was to consist of the President (elected as formerly), the Minister of Defence (representing the army), and nine other Ministers—five from the majority party and four from the minority. To hide the nakedness of this manœuvre it was also agreed that 'every and any interest' was free to go up and contest the election equally with the National-Sinn-Fein-Panel.

The news of this pact came as another disconcerting surprise to British Ministers. It looked as though the British Government were being treated with contempt, which was indeed the case, and in Ireland created no surprise. The raid of the I.R.A. into Down and Antrim on the 21st of May, and generally the intensification of the 'war' in the North, gave point to the challenge. It seemed necessary to use 'firm language,' and on the 31st Winston Churchill used it in the House of Commons. The compact, he said, meant that the anti-Treaty men, of whom Mr. Griffith had declared the day before that they did not represent two per cent. of the people, were to receive 57 seats in the new Parliament as against 64 for the supporters of the Treaty. The Treaty, he said, must be carried out in the letter and in the spirit; if a Republican member in the new Cabinet refused to make a declaration of adherence to the Treaty, the Treaty would be broken, and in that event the Imperial Government would resume 'such liberty of action, whether in regard to the resumption of powers which have been transferred or to the re-occupation of territory, as we may think appropriate and proportionate

to the gravity of the breach.' Britain, he declared, would not tolerate the establishment of a Republic, and troops had been retained in Dublin to prevent any attempt to do so.

The situation was now extremely critical. On 1 June a meeting of the British signatories of the Treaty was held in London at which the Earl of Cavan, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was present. On the same day Sir James Craig and the Marquess of Londonderry, who were in London at the invitation of the Government, had conversations with Ministers on the situation as it affected Ulster, with what effect is not known, save that it was three days later that the I.R.A. were driven out of Pettigo by British forces. Delegates from Southern Ireland were also in London in force, of whom Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith attended a meeting of the Cabinet at Downing Street. The nature of these discussions can only be gauged by subsequent events. The Government, as a matter of fact, was not in a position, even had it desired to do so, to destroy the pact so far as the elections were concerned; it was only afterwards that it could set limits to its application. On the 29th of May the Lord-Lieutenant and Michael Collins, as President of the Provisional Government, had issued proclamations dissolving the 'Parliament of Southern Ireland,' whose shadowy existence legally embraced the Dail, and the elections for the new Provisional Parliament had been fixed for 16 June. The decision to await the result may perhaps have been influenced by the fact that there were plentiful signs that other elements besides Sinn Fein were going to put themselves forward, notably Labour and the farming interest. An overwhelming verdict in favour of the Treaty could not in the circumstances be expected; but it was probable that at least an increased majority of its supporters would be returned.

On the day before the elections the draft Constitution of the Irish Free State was published, in order that the electors might have it before them. For the purpose of drawing up the Constitution a committee, under the chairmanship of Michael Collins, had been appointed by the Provisional Government at the end of January. The draft presented in due course by this body to His Majesty's

Ministers had come as yet another shock to them. It was a purely Republican Constitution, logically built up on the premiss defined in Article II., that 'all powers of government and all authority legislative, executive and judicial, are derived from the people.' From first to last there was no mention of the King. It was, as Kevin O'Higgins admitted in the Dail later, a 'try on.' 'We went over,' he said, 'with the spirit of a man who knows well that he is not going to get all that he is asking for and therefore aims high.'¹ The expedient was eminently successful. The Constitution, as it emerged from the debates with the harassed confidential servants of the Crown, remained—as Mr. O'Higgins duly explained to the Dail—essentially Republican.² In all its seventy-nine clauses the King was only mentioned seven times, and for the first time in Article 12. 'In Ireland under this Constitution,' said Mr. O'Higgins again, 'the real power is in the hands of the people acting through their Parliament, no matter what fictitious or theoretical powers are supposed to reside elsewhere.' The King, as he explained, was no more than a 'useful fiction' even in Great Britain; in Ireland he would be even less; for under the Constitution the President of the Executive Council and the other Ministers were not to be servants of the Crown but of the Dail which elected them, while the Dail itself, though summoned and dissolved by the representative of the Crown, was empowered itself to fix the date of the conclusion of its sessions and of its reassembly. For the rest, the Constitution as revealed by the draft published on the eve of the election was of the most advanced democratic type. The Parliament (Oireachtas) was, indeed, to consist of two Houses—the Assembly of Deputies (Dail) and the Senate (Seanad), but both of these were to be elective, though half the members of the first Senate were to be nominated by the President, in order to ensure some

¹ Speech on the motion of Mr. Gavan Duffy to place the Draft Constitution as taken over to London in the hands of the members of the Dail (29 September 1922, *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 2). 'I submit,' said Dr. McCartan in supporting the motion, 'that the Constitution we should consider is the Draft Constitution submitted to the Provisional Government. . . . I do not think there was much reference in it to the noodle they call the King.'

² Speech in the Dail on the oath, 20 September (*Ibid.* Im. 1, Uimh. 8. col. 486).

degree of representation to the large 'Unionist' minority.¹ Election was to be by universal suffrage, and from the Swiss Constitution were borrowed the systems of Initiative and Referendum. The powers of the Senate were strictly limited; it could not touch money bills, and its veto on ordinary legislation was made merely suspensive. By Article 44 it was laid down that Parliament (Oireachtas) might provide for the establishment of Functional or Vocational Councils representing branches of the social and economic life of the nation. A law establishing any such Council was to determine its powers, rights and duties, and its relation to the government of the Irish Free State. The main interest of this article is that, in view of the fact that the principle of private property is nowhere safeguarded in the Constitution, it seems to make it possible for a Communist Soviet system to be set up, in the event of an extreme Labour Government coming into power, without violence being done to the Constitution.

Such were the outstanding features of the draft Constitution published on the eve of the elections. It was issued too late for the electors to study it. This was, however, of little importance. The election really turned upon the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Treaty, and it was clear from the first that the Republican stalwarts had no intention of leaving the issue to the free vote of the people. The conditions under which the elections were held in some parts of the country are best described in the words of President Cosgrave. 'Neither sex nor age,' he said, 'nor even religion were spared. Roads were blocked to prevent meetings; firearms were used against speakers, and in one case a meeting to be addressed by the late President (Griffith) was proclaimed. . . . At

¹ On 14 June a letter was addressed to the Colonial Secretary by the Provost of Trinity (Bishop Bernard), the Earls of Midleton and Donoughmore, and Mr. Andrew Jameson—representing the Unionist minority who had supported the Treaty—protesting against the constitution of the Senate. 'We are not satisfied,' they wrote, 'that any Senate constituted as proposed by popular election, and with powers so strictly limited, can afford a genuine protection to minorities in Ireland.' This is, of course, true. But with the establishment of the Free State the *raison d'être* of Unionism in Ireland came to an end, and it is difficult to see how 'Unionists,' as such, could be represented. The true lines of cleavage are religious, social and, to a certain extent, racial, and it is not thinkable that, under modern conditions, any one of these divisions could have been given separate representation.

the risk of his life he set out for Sligo. . . . The late Commander-in-Chief, General Michael Collins, who was unquestionably the most hunted man by the British during the late war,¹ encountered armed opposition at meetings held in various parts of the country. . . . Trees were felled and placed across the roads to prevent people attending the meetings; rails were torn up to prevent people travelling by trains; newspapers were seized to prevent the people reading about the meetings, and terrorism of the basest kind indulged in under a political label. . . .'² In these circumstances the result of the elections could not but be considered an unequivocal acceptance of the Treaty by the people. Of the Panel candidates 94 were returned, the proportion in favour of the Treaty being somewhat increased. Of independent candidates 47 were proposed, of whom 34 were elected, namely, 17 labour, 7 farmers, 6 representatives of Rate-payers' Associations and traders, and 4 representatives of Dublin University, all of these being supporters of the Treaty. The new Dail thus contained a substantial majority in favour of the Free State settlement. It was, however, to be nearly three months before it assembled; and meanwhile the question at issue was to be put to the arbitrament of arms.

¹ Mr. Lloyd George's Government placed a price of £5000, and later £10,000, upon his head.

² Statement in the Dail of 11 Sept. 1922 (*Parl. Deb. Im. 1, Uimh. 2*). This authoritative statement of the conditions under which elections are held in Ireland in times of public excitement may serve to throw some light on the earlier elections, held under the influence of Sinn Fein, as a true index to public opinion.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIRTH-THROES OF THE FREE STATE

The Republicans declare war on England—The Provisional Government roused—Capture and destruction of the Four Courts—Fighting in Dublin—Reduction of the Irregular strongholds—Death of Cathal Brugha—Civil war in the provinces—Character of the war—Military successes of the National Army—Guerilla warfare resumed—Campaign of destruction—Bolshevist influences—Organised wrecking of roads and railways—Wholesale burning of country houses—Impotence of the Roman Catholic Church—Manifesto of the Bishops—Demoralisation of the young—Death of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins—Meeting of the Provisional Parliament—William Cosgrave elected President—Debates on the Army and Police—Attacks on the Government's policy of coercion—Establishment of martial law—Character of the Army—The Government behind barbed wire—Terrorist tactics of the Irregulars—'Coercion' intensified—Policy of reprisals—Execution of Rory O'Connor—Erskine Childers executed—Kevin O'Higgins on the manufacture of 'atrocities'—The Constitution accepted by the Dail—The Free State Constitution Bill in Parliament—Proclamation of the Free State—The last British troops leave—The Northern Parliament refuses to come under the Free State—Sir James Craig on the Boundary question—President Cosgrave and the Southern Unionists—Conclusion.

THOUGH the new Dail, or Provisional Parliament, did not meet, the result of the elections gave fresh moral support to the Provisional Government, and enabled it at last to show some vigour. Ever since March 1922 the great block of buildings known as the Four Courts had been occupied by Rory O'Connor and his 'Irregulars,' who had turned it into a strong fortress of which the approaches were regularly mined. No effort whatever had been made to oust these men from this position nor from the other buildings held by them in Dublin, from which they issued to requisition supplies from the neighbouring tradesmen. Even before the elections, however, it had become clear that something must be done to assert the authority of the Government; and it was rumoured that, if the Provisional Government refused any longer to take action, the Imperial troops, of whom some ten thousand were still

concentrated in Dublin, would intervene.¹ There was evidence, indeed, that this was precisely what the Republicans were aiming at. A resolution passed by the Executive of the I.R.A. at the Four Courts on 14 June laid down that negotiations for army unification with Beggar's Bush² must cease, and that while no offensive was to be undertaken against the Beggar's Bush forces, any action was to be taken which might be necessary 'to maintain the Republic against British aggression.' On the 18th—after the general election—forces from the Four Courts raided the Curragh and seized munitions, and on the same day Rory O'Connor, Ernest O'Malley and Thomas Barry, with an armoured and a Lancia car and a band of Irregulars from the Four Courts, held up members of the new Civic Guard at the Cross of Kildare, and disarmed them. 'The disarmed Civic Guards were there and then informed by the O'Connor-O'Malley-Barry party that they had declared war on England, that they had issued an ultimatum for Monday morning, and that they did not want to be fighting with Irishmen, and they asked the Civic Guard to come along with them.'³ Dreadful point was given to this four days later. On the 22nd, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, perhaps the most distinguished of living Irishmen, was assassinated in the streets of London. It was the first overt act of the new 'war with England,' a ghastly proof that the members of the I.R.A. were in deadly earnest when they declared the prime object of the 'dictatorship' of the Army Executive set up by them to be the overthrow of 'the four Governments in Ireland opposed to the Republic, viz., Dail Eireann, Provisional Government, British Government, and Northern Government.'⁴

Clearly, if the Provisional Government and the Treaty

¹ This was specifically stated in the *Daily Bulletin* of the Republican Executive. Quoted in *The Workers' Republic* for 25 November 1922.

² The General Headquarters of the Regular Army were at this time established in Beggar's Bush barracks.

³ Statement of President Cosgrave, of 11 September, *cit.* col. 75. An intercepted despatch of 10 July from the headquarters of the Kerry No. 1 Brigade of the I.R.A. contained the following passage: 'If an English destroyer or sloop comes within rifle shot of your shore, snipe it, and, if possible, have a rifle grenade dropped on deck. Possibly they may shell the coast or make a landing—the very thing which we want them to do. Then we have the old enemy back, and that will clear the whole aspect of the present war' (*Ibid.* col. 78).

⁴ *Ibid.* col. 70.

were to survive, it was time to exchange words for deeds. A beginning was made on the 26th of June, when National troops surprised a party of Irregulars from the Four Courts, who were looting a motor garage in Dublin on pretext of maintaining the boycott of Belfast, and arrested their leader, Commandant Henderson. Two days later, after an ultimatum to the garrison, siege was laid to the Four Courts. It remains a mystery why these buildings were not simply surrounded with troops, the water supply cut off, and the garrison starved into surrender. Possibly it was feared that the defenders, if given time, would destroy the building before giving themselves up, and that the best hope of preserving it seemed to be that the appearance of an attacking force with field-guns would at once induce them to surrender. This was not the case, however, as it was easy for those defending the huge and very massive pile to avoid the parts exposed to shell-fire. 'In the desire to save the lives of those in the building,' ran the official report, 'special precautions were taken in attacking,' with results beneficial to the garrison, which suffered but few casualties, but ultimately fatal to the Four Courts and its priceless contents. On the 28th Rory O'Connor and his men surrendered unconditionally, to the number of 170, and were taken under escort to Mountjoy Prison. Of the attacking force three privates were killed, and five officers and fifty rank and file wounded. Their task had been no easy one, and even when the fortress had been occupied the danger was not over. The whole place was found to be elaborately mined, and at 12.30 a mine under the great central hall was exploded by the retreating Irregulars. The effect was terrific. A vast column of smoke and debris was shot up into the air, and the debris included the contents of the great law library and of the Public Record Office. The archives of centuries of Irish history were literally scattered to the winds; torn fragments of them were picked up miles away, some even crossing Dublin Bay and settling on the shore of the headland of Howth. It was at least magnificently symbolic of the end of a civilisation.

The siege of the Four Courts marked the beginning of the war between the rival sections of Sinn Fein which was to desolate Ireland for months to come. It would be

impossible, and would serve no useful purpose, to follow its developments in any detail, and I shall not attempt to do more than to give a general impression of its character and results. So far, indeed, as what may be called major operations are concerned, it was of no long duration. After eight days of fighting the last of the Irregular strongholds in Dublin, the Granville Hotel in Sackville Street, surrendered to the National forces on 5 July. The victory had been dearly won, for during the fighting fires had broken out and the greater part of the street which had escaped destruction in 1916 was now a mass of smoking ruins. The surrender, according to the prisoners, had been ordered by Cathal Brugha. He himself refused to yield. At the last moment he ran out of the burning building towards the Free State troops, firing his revolver. The fire was returned, and he was mortally wounded. Thus perished one of the most reckless and ruthless of the gunmen of the rebellion, the first of many of the leaders whose ends were to illustrate the truth of the saying that 'those who take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

But, though defeated in Dublin, the Irregular forces were practically masters of Southern Ireland and of large parts of the West and North. Even in the capital they had not been so much crushed as driven underground; their organisation had not been broken up, and they were still confident of being able to wear down the resistance of the Irish Government by the same methods as those which had proved so successful against Great Britain. In this contest, indeed, they were in some ways more favourably placed than in the 'war with England.' The forces arrayed against them were less numerous, less disciplined, and less well organised, and to the last their zeal was—to say the least of it—tempered by memories of the old comradeship in arms with the rebels and a certain sympathy with their ideals.¹ Hence, doubtless, in all these 'battles' and 'sieges,' which figure in the official bulletins,

¹ 'The Army is no better than the people it comes from, and you know the extent to which the Irish people is a disciplined people at the moment' (General Mulcahy in the Dail, 16 November 1922). 'They [the Army] have not shown blood-lust . . . these men that are pitted against them are to some extent men who fought along with them in the past' (Mr. Kevin O'Higgins, Debate of 27 September). 'More men are in arms against the Irish than ever there were against the British' (Mr. Cathal O'Shannon, Debate of 29 November).

the vast disproportion between the expenditure of ammunition and the number of casualties on either side. Hence, too, the dragging out of the war, and the fact—which was admitted by the Government—that the greatest sufferers by it were ‘the unarmed and unprotected people.’¹

The character that the struggle was to take was revealed at the very outset. On 1 July the bridge at Drogheda was blown up, and ten days later the Army Headquarters announced that the ‘Irregulars’ were carrying out a systematic plan of destruction of all communications and of everything that might be of service to the National forces. At first, indeed, it seemed as though this policy would quickly fail, and the papers were able to announce the ‘success of the National troops at all points.’ But the limitation of this success was soon clear. The nature of the first victory announced illustrates the whole process. Immediately before the outbreak of the war the Irregulars had occupied Blessington, an important strategic position commanding the roads passing round the Wicklow Mountains, which lie between Dublin and the south. An elaborate sweeping movement was therefore undertaken by the National forces to clear the mountains and surround the six hundred rebels entrenched in the town. On the 13th of July the success of this manœuvre was announced. Blessington was in the hands of the Government; but its garrison had succeeded in slipping through the cordon with their arms, some to join the forces in revolt in the south, some to establish themselves in the impenetrable wilds of the Wicklow Mountains, whence for months to come they descended to terrorise and loot the suburbs of Dublin. It was the same story everywhere. Day by day came news of the steady advance of the National troops. On 21 July Waterford was occupied, and on the 27th the barracks at Limerick were bombarded and stormed, and the Irregulars cleared out of the town. During August the same tale continued. Cashel was occupied on the 4th, Listowel and Kilmallock on the 7th, Castleisland and Farranfore on the 9th, and Clonmel, the headquarters of the Irregular resistance in South Tipperary, on the 12th.

¹ Army Headquarters Official Report, 14 July.

On the 8th National forces, conveyed by sea, landed near Cork, and the defiance of the Republicans was signalised by the burning of Admiralty House and the British Naval Hospital. Presently Cork itself fell to the Government troops, and other places in various parts of Ireland rapidly followed. The Irregulars had early abandoned Sligo and Galway cities, after burning the barracks. County Mayo had been 'almost cleared' by the end of July, and at the beginning of September it was announced that troops from Nenagh and Tipperary were beginning a round-up in the Tipperary Mountains.

But, though the forces of the Provisional Government thus held what in any ordinary campaigning would have been considered the key positions, the war was only begun. The new Army Council,¹ established on 13 July, was in fact faced with exactly the same problem as that which had confronted all the would-be subduers of Ireland, from Turgeis the Norseman to Viscount French. Towns might be taken and armies defeated, but the victors found themselves masters only of the ground on which they stood, while the vanquished melted away into the bogs and mountains, to harass the flanks and rear of their conquerors. The English, from the days of Elizabeth to those of the Commonwealth, had overcome this method of warfare by a policy of utter ruthlessness. But, if the policy of 'cruelty well applied' was impossible to the Government of Mr. Lloyd George, it was still more impossible to that of the Free State. The Provisional Government had announced on 19 July that 'the rebellion must be crushed'; but, not unnaturally, it shrank from the methods necessary to crush it; and it was only gradually, and late, that it was forced into adopting these methods. Meanwhile, during these early months of the civil war, the successes of the National forces had not crushed the rebellion—they had only scattered it. The Regulars might hold the towns; the Irregulars held the countryside, and they set to work systematically and ruthlessly to make not only the position of the troops in the towns, but government itself, impossible.

¹ It consisted of General Michael Collins, Commander-in-Chief; General Richard Mulcahy, Chief of Staff; and General Eoin O'Duffy, commanding the South-Western Division.

So far as government was concerned, they succeeded ; for during the rest of the year there was, save in Dublin and certain other centres, virtually no government in Southern Ireland. There is an element of mystery in the organised anarchy that resulted. The methods of the Irregulars are, indeed, easy to understand : they simply used against their new foes the same expedients which, together, they had employed against the British. ' Flying columns ' scoured the country, requisitioning supplies and living at free quarters on the inhabitants, cutting communications, and attacking isolated Free State posts. Traitors to the Republic were prosecuted and, wherever they could be got at, ' executed.' There were once more, to use Michael Collins' words, ' too many gloomy corners in Dublin, too many ambush positions in the country,' and the exultation in the Republican ranks was great when Michael Collins himself, on 16 August, was caught in one of the ambushes and killed ¹—the most notable of many officers of the Free State who were to share the same fate. Tactics such as these, which had proved successful before and might prove successful again, are easy to understand. It is otherwise with what appeared to be the effort, organised with diabolical skill, to destroy the whole economic life of the country. It is true that De Valera had taken command in the south, and he had once committed himself to the principle that ' all and every means ' may be used to secure a political end. But no one could accuse De Valera of a desire to ruin Ireland, nor credit him with the brains necessary to organise the ruin actually achieved. Erskine Childers, the incalculable Englishman who had thrown in his lot with the Republicans and carried his cousin Robert Barton with him, was widely assumed to be the organising brain in all this orgy of destruction ; but, though he is known to have directed such operations as the cutting of the Atlantic cables at Valentia on 28 August—of which the object was to provoke a British intervention—it is doubtful if he can be made responsible for activities which had no obvious ' military ' object, and seemed to be directed solely to the overthrow of the whole

¹ At Bealnablath, between Macroom and Cork. This was within a few hundred yards of the spot where the seventeen auxiliary cadets were lured into an ambush and done to death on 29 November 1920.

social order—the operations of what President Cosgrave graphically described as ‘Bedlam let loose.’

The truth appears to be that the conditions in Ireland created by the Sinn Fein rebellion, and later by the Republican revolt, gave a unique opportunity for the sinister forces which from their centre in Russia were plotting the dissolution of civilisation in every quarter of the globe.¹ The Irregular forces often consisted of men who, however mistaken, really believed that they were engaged in a high patriotic mission, and from various quarters it was reported that they conducted themselves better than the Government troops. Men of this type had no sympathy with ‘Bolshevism.’ But the ranks of the Irregulars were also recruited from the wastrel and criminal classes; bands of ruffians, owing no allegiance, also took advantage of the general anarchy to destroy and loot; while, last but not least, the peasants—not to mention the landless labourers—seized so unique an opportunity for satisfying their perennial land-hunger. Add to this the silly vanity of the mob of ignorant women enrolled in such organisations as the Cumann na mBan,² and all the materials were to hand for the subtle foreign brains which were plotting the desolation of Ireland as a necessary step towards the destruction of Great Britain and her Empire.

From whatever quarter the impulse came—and it probably came from several—before the end of the year Southern Ireland was, to use the language of the Roman Catholic bishops, ‘wrecked from end to end.’ The wrecking began immediately after the Treaty—Listowel, Mr. Roche’s house in County Kerry being burned on 11 January 1922—and grew from month to month, though it was only after the outbreak of the civil war that it reached very great proportions. At first it seemed as if the object of the wreckers was no more than to satisfy personal vendettas, as in the burning of the homes of ex-R.I.C. men or of certain factories and creameries, or to make

¹ ‘The British Socialist who fails to support by all possible means the risings in Ireland, Egypt, and India against the London plutocracy—such a “Socialist” should not only not get a mandate of confidence from the workers, but should be shot, or, at any rate, branded with shame’ (*The Communist International*, No. 13, May 1921, the official organ of the Communist International in Moscow).

² The organisation of this was military, and the members were trained in the use of the revolver.

reprisals for the alleged persecution of Catholics in the North, as in the burning of Protestant schools and parsonages, Orange and Masonic lodges, and the houses of Protestant country gentlemen. To these motives others were added later. The policy of the Republicans was to make government, and life itself, impossible under the Free State. All communications were to be broken, all business brought to a standstill, all property threatened. It was a policy which appealed to all the lawless instincts of what Lalor Sheil once described as 'the ferocious peasantry.' In ever increasing numbers the houses of the country gentry went up in flames, many of them splendid mansions filled with art treasures and enshrining priceless records; for in Ireland many families had lived in the same house undisturbed for centuries. The demeanour of the executors of these outrages varied. Sometimes they expressed regret, stated that they were acting 'under orders,' and even helped their victims to save some of their belongings. More often, however, they acted with complete brutality, threatening delicate women and even children with revolvers, turning old and infirm people out into the cold of a winter's night without giving them time to dress, looting what they wanted, setting fire to the house, and then waiting just long enough to see that it was impossible to save anything from the wreck.¹ The motives behind these burnings were also various. Some were punishments decreed by the Irregular Executive against any who dared to serve the 'usurping Government.' Others were the work of mere bands of robbers; others again that of peasants who, on pretext of reprisals for the execution of rebels, burned down the mansion and then seized and divided up the demesne. But what was perhaps most sinister in its significance was that, not only did the people reputed respectable in the countryside—small farmers and others—do nothing to stop these outrages, but that they often crowded to share in the plunder. As General Mulcahy said in the Dail, 'Everybody minds his business and many people take their little bit when it comes their way.'²

¹ In one case known to me the raiders, a peculiarly ruffianly lot, refused to allow any attempt to be made to save the horses from the fire. There were also several horrible cases of rape.

² *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 13, 27 Sept. 1922, col. 862.

More destructive to the economic life of the country were the organised attacks on the railways and other means of communication, which began in the early summer of 1922 and continued for nearly a year. The amount of damage done was enormous, the worst sufferer being the Great Southern and Western Railway. In the Chairman's report presented on 1 March 1923 it was stated that there had been 467 cases of damage to the permanent way, 236 cases of damage to under-bridges and 55 of damage to over-bridges, 103 signal cabins destroyed or damaged, 36 buildings burned, and 468 locomotives, carriages and other rolling-stock derailed or destroyed. Of the last form of damage no less than 421 cases occurred in the first two months of 1923. Bands of armed men would hold up a train, order the passengers to alight, and then either set light to the carriages and send the train under full steam down the line, or uncouple the engine, take it some way up the line and then send it charging back into the standing carriages. Since it was impossible to guard every mile of the railways, these exploits were almost always carried out with perfect impunity. One perhaps deserves special mention: the blowing-up of the great railway viaduct over the Blackwater at Mallow, which cut off Cork from railway communication with the north. This piece of destruction was so scientifically carried out that it was widely believed to have been the work of German military engineers.

As to the economic effects of all this, long before the tale of ruin was complete the Ministers of the Government were ruefully counting the cost. As President Cosgrave put it, instead of starting from scratch the nation was going many milestones behind the starting-point.¹ 'We are presented with the spectacle of a country bleeding to death,' said Mr. Kevin O'Higgins in the Dail, 'of a country steering straight for anarchy, futility and chaos.'² Mr. Tom Johnson, the labour leader, deplored the moral as well as the economic ruin. 'Not only is human life cheap,' he said, 'but the expression of human life that is found in material things is also too cheap, and the passion of destruction that this leads to is thought little of.'³ This,

¹ *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 29, 16 Nov., col. 2217.

² *Ibid.* Im. 1, Uimh. 13, 27 Sept., col. 870.

³ *Ibid.* Im. 1, Uimh. 29, 16 Nov., col. 2221.

indeed, was the most serious aspect of the matter. The 'island of saints' was rapidly becoming an island of devils, and there was no authority, moral or physical, to stop the facile descent to hell. The Roman Catholic Church, once supreme in Southern Ireland, had played a somewhat sorry part as a moral guide during the revolution, and Young Ireland was now openly flouting its authority. The bishops tried in vain to arrest the moral rot. Already, in April, they had issued from Maynooth a joint pastoral, in which they had warned their flock that 'no one is justified in rebelling against a legitimate government, whatever it is, set up by the nation, and acting within its rights'; but a pronouncement so equivocal was hardly likely to impress ardent Republicans, who denied that the Free State Government was legitimate in the sense defined, and may be forgiven for not recognising the fine distinction between 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' rebellion. On 10 October another joint pastoral was issued from Maynooth. It was almost a wail of despair. The bishops appealed to the Irregular leaders to abandon their 'immoral methods.' 'Our country,' they said, 'that was but yesterday so glorious has become a byword among the nations:—a section have wrecked Ireland from end to end. They have done more damage in three months than could be laid to the charge of British rule in three decades.'¹ They spoke of 'the young lives utterly spoiled by early association with cruelty, robbery, falsehood and crime.' Religion itself, they complained, was not spared, there being insulting suggestions of a cabal among the priests against the bishops. 'In this lamentable upheaval,' they said, 'the moral sense of the people has, we fear, been badly shaken. We read with horror of the many unauthorised murders . . .'² But enough! The last sentence quoted may perhaps help to explain why the moral sense of the people had become badly shaken. After all, impressionable boys and girls who begin with an unauthorised murder or two are apt to be led away into worse sins, may even lapse into sexual immorality, and end by neglecting the sacraments. This is, in fact, what happened in Ireland. There was no widespread open

¹ This might possibly make sense if it read 'three centuries.'

² *Irish Times*, 11 October 1922.

revolt against the Church. There was simply a widespread contempt for the moral precepts of Christianity.

The addresses of the Protestant bishops¹ struck a somewhat different note, their concern being mainly with their scattered flocks, which in certain parts of the South and West were threatened with extinction. 'In our land,' said the Archbishop of Armagh, 'anarchy and outrage have left terrible scars. Many of the very best of our people have been driven from our shores. . . . The sufferings that have been endured can never be told. Some of the noblest monuments of the past have been utterly destroyed. No financial estimate can represent the loss of beautiful historic buildings, of treasures of art, of priceless documents. Ireland is immeasurably poorer than she was two years ago. Nor was there the excuse of poverty—there were no starving multitudes clamouring for bread. Ireland was rich and prosperous when the work of destruction began.'¹ These words are all the more poignant since they were uttered in November, at the beginning of the worst and most ruinous period of destruction. From this time onward, and notably after the establishment of the Free State Government on 6 December, the zeal of the destroyers seemed to redouble, an increasing trail of fire advertising to the world that the Republic yet lived. Between January and November 1922 fifty country houses and mansions had been burned. Between the beginning of November and the early spring of 1923, when De Valera announced the cessation of hostilities, eighty-nine had gone up in flames. Add to all this that labour in Ireland, debauched by the uneconomic wages forced on employers during the Great War, was utterly out of hand, and it is easy to see the almost overwhelming difficulties that faced the new Government in its efforts to get the administration of the country into working order.

These difficulties seemed to be greatly increased in August by the removal, within a few days of each other, of the two most conspicuous supporters of the Treaty and the settlement based upon it. On the 12th occurred

¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 3 Nov. 1922. See, too, the address of the Bishop of Ossory (*ibid.*), in which he urges his people not to give way to despair, but to stick to their country like loyal Irishmen. Unhappily, in very many cases it was quite impossible to follow this advice.

the sudden death of Arthur Griffith ; on the 16th Michael Collins was killed in an ambush near Macroom. Their loss was felt at first as a staggering blow to the Free State. The founder of Sinn Fein and the ' victor of the war with England ' were both, in their various ways, regarded as indispensable. Their records were the strongest arguments against the wild charges of De Valera and his partisans ; and both had, in the hour of their un hoped-for success, displayed a capacity and a statesman-like moderation which had done something to reconcile conservative opinion to the new order. Both were followed to the grave by vast and sorrowing crowds. Yet their loss was soon felt not to be an unmitigated misfortune. The qualities which make effective leaders of revolts are not those which make effective rulers in time of revolt. Griffith, by nature a man of letters rather than a politician ; was too sensitive to play the ruthless part which the circumstances of the times demanded ; Collins, the hero of gloomy corners and ambush positions, was out of place as the stern military upholder of law and order, and felt himself to be so. Both were hampered by old and close association with the men whom they were fighting. But the times demanded new and stronger measures ; and it was perhaps well that the direction of affairs passed into other hands.

On the death of President Griffith, his duties were undertaken by Alderman William T. Cosgrave (Liam T. MacCosgair), Minister for Local Government, and four days later he was also called upon to fill the places left vacant by Michael Collins at the Ministry of Finance and as acting Chairman of the Provisional Government. The meeting of the Provisional Parliament of Southern Ireland, elected on 30 June, had been several times postponed, in the hope that the civil strife might be ended and the dissident members persuaded to take the oath and their seats. There was no sign of peace as yet. During the week ending on 2 September there were many ambushes, both in Dublin and the country, against which the Free State troops, for all their experience, seemed to be as helpless as ever the British had been ; on the 5th the Irregulars attacked Macroom with machine guns, a trench mortar, and two armoured cars, and were only

beaten off by means of an 18-pounder gun after over eight hours' fighting ; on the 9th they captured Kenmare ; and everywhere there were sniping, murders, and outrages. Clearly, there was little hope of improvement, and it was absolutely essential to summon Parliament, in order to establish the new Government and arm it with the necessary powers. On 9 September, accordingly, the Provisional Parliament (Dail) met for the first time in the theatre of the Royal Dublin Society, in the former town house of the Dukes of Leinster.

The Parliament consisted only of the pro-Treaty majority. The absence of the militant Republicans in general, and of the ' wild women ' in particular, if regrettable from the point of view of complete representation, was from every other point of view certainly an advantage. In the debates of the Provisional Parliament there was none of the mere sound and fury which had too often characterised those of the second Dail. The proceedings were, from the first, conducted with a good temper and decorum in striking contrast with those of earlier assemblies and even—as Irishmen maliciously pointed out—with those of the Mother of Parliaments herself in recent times. Even the Labour Party, which under the able leadership of Tom Johnson acted as a sort of Opposition, showed a somewhat surprising moderation, and its criticism of the Government's actions was occasionally sound and rarely, if ever, factious. This business-like and sane temper was, doubtless, largely the outcome of the recognition by members of the extreme seriousness of the situation with which they were called upon to deal. The primary object of their convocation was to act as a constituent assembly to pass the new Constitution and establish the Free State ; the first obligation of this assembly was, however, to establish its own authority ; for, as the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Kevin O'Higgins, said, ' you cannot build where foundations are challenged.'

A wise move in this direction was made when the Dail formally elected William Cosgrave to its presidency, an office now combined with the chairmanship of the Provisional Government ; for the new President before long gained the confidence of the majority of his countrymen by his good sense, moderation, and courage. In his

opening address, on 11 September, after sketching the origin and progress of the civil war, he summed up his programme as follows: 'We must realise our responsibilities not to one section or one order of the community, and we must seek to make the administration of this country and the business of the Parliament something worthy of the people. Our Army and Police Force must be efficient; the Courts must command the confidence of the people, and the Parliament must resuscitate the Gaelic spirit and the Gaelic civilisation for which we have been fighting through the ages and all but lost.'¹ This statement is interesting as revealing the principles to which the President consistently adhered. As a declaration of policy, however, it certainly lacked definition, and he was attacked by Cathal O'Shannon with some warmth for failing to say what steps the Government intended to take to stop the anarchy in the country, to preserve the people from the arbitrary violence of the military, and to secure proper discipline in the Army. 'We want to get down to realities,' he said. 'We want to get rid of humbug, of sentimentalities, and things like that.' The Labour members complained more especially of the attitude of the Government and of the Army towards the interests they represented. Tom Johnson denounced the principle enunciated, in connection with the Post Office strike, that civil servants had not the right to strike, and complained that the evening before National troops had, without any warning whatever, fired over the heads of peaceful pickets outside the post office in Crown Alley.² The main charge against the Government, however, was that it had arrested and interned, without trial or any warrant of law, thousands of men and women. 'No one in Ireland,' said Cathal O'Shannon, 'knows if an Army officer is entitled to arrest or shoot. No one knows if the operations are in charge of the civil authorities, or whether the Army is in charge.'³

This was a true enough description of the situation, and the debates which followed have some lasting interest. On the 12th a vote of confidence in the Government, based on the President's statement, was carried by 54

¹ *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 2, col. 80.

² *Ibid.* col. 116.

³ *Ibid.* col. 87.

votes to 15. On the 14th, however, the whole question was reopened by a motion of Gavan Duffy 'that a measure should be introduced immediately to legalise and control with suitable safeguards such executive action as may be necessary during the present civil war for curtailing the liberty of the subject.' Point was given to this motion by the fact that the Government 'had imprisoned one of its own judges without charge or trial,'¹ and that this gentleman was threatening to go on hunger-strike. The defence was sensible enough. Kevin O'Higgins enlarged on the difficulties which had faced the Provisional Government. Its very constitution was anomalous. It was not either the creation of, or responsible to, a Parliament, and was 'rather a committee to tide over a very difficult and transitory stage than a Government in the ordinary sense of the word.' 'I wonder,' he said, 'if in the history of the world there was ever a greater responsibility thrust on nine very young and rather inexperienced men.' They had had to govern a country during the virtual interregnum between one system and another, and the task had been rendered far more difficult by the violent criticism and, later, the armed opposition to which they had been exposed. They had not at their disposal all the machinery to enable everything to be done according to law, but had done them according to their lights. Men could not be allowed to go about the country doing and saying things calculated to hamper the restoration of law and order. At first no one had been kept in prison who would sign a simple undertaking not to resist the Government or to attack property; but, unhappily, in many cases prisoners had been released on giving this undertaking who had immediately violated it. It was safer to keep such people in prison. This argument was endorsed by President Cosgrave. The Government, he said, had 'not perhaps exactly regulated and conducted the arrests according to the written law,' but he thought that the first duty of the Government was to act in the interests of public safety.

This was a very sound principle, and had it been acted upon by His Majesty's Ministers under the Union it is probable that order would never have been seriously

¹ Mr. Martin Crowley, a member of the Republican Supreme Court.

disturbed. The most obvious gain of the revolution thus far was that the government of Ireland had been taken out of the hands of legal pedants and political doctrinaires. It was clear, none the less, that the Government would have to arm itself with legal powers of an exceptional character pending the reconstruction of the administrative machinery of the country, which was now—since the forced retirement of the Resident Magistrates—without either magistracy or police. Here and there, amid incalculable risks and difficulties, the old County Court judges continued to deal with civil cases, pending their supersession by the new District Magistrates; but the only force as yet available for dealing with crime was the Army, for the new Civic Guard, which was destined to replace the old R.I.C., was unarmed and not yet trained.¹

In these circumstances it was decided to give the Army fresh powers; and on 29 September an Act passed the Dail setting up Army Courts with summary jurisdiction and the power to inflict the death penalty, the ultimate responsibility for carrying out the sentences to rest with the general officers commanding the eight military districts. The proposal to confer these terrific powers on a body so ill disciplined, and composed of such heterogeneous elements, was very naturally strongly opposed, the Labour members especially, while recognising the necessity for stern measures, pointing out the danger to life and liberty involved. In defending the measure General Mulcahy, the Minister for Defence and Commander-in-Chief,² admitted that there had been 'difficulty with the Army from a disciplinary point of view.' He admitted, too, that the police work being done by the Army was 'no work proper for an army to do,' but defended it on the ground that there was no other machinery. The military problem, he said, had been largely solved, and was now confined to a few isolated areas. The problem now before

¹ 'The force is young . . . the necessary time has not been available for instructing the force in police work' (President Cosgrave in the Dail, 16 November, *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 29, col. 2205). At the outset these men were at the mercy of the 'Irregulars,' who frequently attacked their barracks, and stripped them of their uniforms and equipment. By the spring of 1923, however, they had become an effective force, disciplined, and in bearing and general appearance closely resembling the old R.I.C.

² He had been gazetted as Commander-in-Chief, in succession to Michael Collins, on 23 August.

the country was to open up the arteries which must be opened up if it was not to be choked. 'All over the South,' he said, 'we have connections running from here to Waterford, to Mallow,¹ and in a day or two to Limerick. But the country lying lateral between these points is practically without transport. Practically the whole of the South of Ireland is without transport. . . . In other parts of the country small bands, that the Army as such cannot very definitely deal with, rush round the country, concentrating here, concentrating there, taking life and destroying property.' It was little use to take the leader of an ambush and put him into prison, for the second in command would merely repeat it, and so on indefinitely. 'It is necessary,' he concluded, 'that it should be known that death is the penalty.'²

The immediate answer of the Irregulars to this threat was the murder, on the day after the passing of this Act, of Mr. Patrick Cosgrave, an inoffensive and respectable publican, who was guilty of being the President's uncle. It was the first conspicuous act in an intensification of the terror which was to last for months. There was an end to the talk of 'brotherhood' between the two sections of Sinn Féin; the fraternisation of the Regular and Irregular forces, which had been common up to and after the taking of the Four Courts, now ceased, though there were rumours of occasional collusion between them, and an uncomfortable suspicion that neither force was eager to end a state of things so congenial to their tempers and withal so profitable. How, it was asked, can Divisional Generals, or even Colonels-Commandant, be zealous for the restoration of a peace the first consequence of which would be to send them back to their forges, their office stools, and their counters? How could even the privates desire peace, which would deprive them of their £3 a week pay, their privileges and allowances, and send them to recruit the luckless army of the unemployed? But whatever weight these very human considerations may have had, they were outweighed by the growing passion of antagonism aroused by outrage and retaliation. The

¹ I.e., to the point where the great viaduct over the Blackwater was broken. Cork was still isolated.

² *Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 13, 27 September 1922.

official reply of the evasive Republican Government to the Act establishing martial law was to proscribe all the members of the Dail who had voted for it ; and the sequel proved that this was no idle threat. There was, indeed, method in the seeming madness of De Valera and his partisans, and the method was successful at least in its immediate object. This object was not so much, as General Mulcahy had once more repeated in the Dail, to bring the English back, as to make it seem that the Free State was but a dishonest expedient for disguising the reality of the continuance of British supremacy in Ireland, and for this purpose to place the Government of the Free State in precisely the same position as that occupied during the years preceding the Treaty by the Government in the Castle.

This latter purpose was achieved. The Government did not, indeed, occupy the Castle itself,¹ which would have made the parallel too obvious. The President and his Cabinet established themselves in the Royal College of Science, while the Dail and the various offices were accommodated in Leinster House, the National Museum and National Library. The whole of this noble group of buildings was presently converted into a fortress, and the Ministers of the Dail proceeded to attempt to govern the country, as the Ministers of the Crown had done, from behind steel plates and barbed-wire entanglements. Marked down as they were for assassination, they were imprisoned in the new Government buildings as effectively as ever had been the Chief Secretary and his assistants in the Castle ; for to have ventured out, save with infinite precautions, would have been to court almost certain death. And from this and other strongholds issued armoured cars and Crossley tenders laden with National troops to scour the streets and the countryside. Conditions were, in fact, to all appearance very much what they had been before the truce, the main difference—from the point of view of the peaceful citizen—being that the raw soldiers handled their rifles so carelessly that there was a perpetual risk of accidents. So far as the behaviour of the troops was concerned, this was in all the circum-

¹ In the spring of 1923 the law courts were established in the Castle, together with certain Government offices.

stances surprisingly good. There were, indeed, reports from time to time of outrageous conduct from the provinces, and in the Dail a Labour member actually compared the methods of the Free State soldiery to those of the 'black-and-tans';¹ but there was general agreement that they carried out such duties as searching people in the streets for arms with consideration and courtesy; and as time went on, and discipline improved, they were regarded by all classes with increasing confidence. In any case they were the only barrier between the country and complete anarchy.

Little by little, too, the Government of President Cosgrave was driven by the action of the rebels to adopt all the coercive measures which, when employed by the British Government, had been denounced *urbi et orbi* as examples of its bloodthirsty tyranny. Courts martial were once more at work; and all that the public knew of their proceedings was derived from the curt announcement that so-and-so had been tried, found guilty, and shot at dawn. Raids on houses in search of arms or treasonable literature were once more the order of the day. The prisons, the unspeakable conditions of which had been so feelingly described to the American Congress and public by those veracious witnesses, Messrs. Frank P. Walsh and E. F. Dunne,² were once more crowded with male and female patriots, interned for indefinite periods without trial. The efforts of the hapless prisoners to secure their release by the old method of the hunger-strike were defeated, as the British had at last defeated them, by telling the hungry ones that 'if they did not take their food, they must take the consequences.' Revolts in the prisons, provoked by 'intolerable conditions' and the 'unspeakable barbarities' of gaolers, were suppressed with British brutality. Women 'of refinement, splendid intellectual gifts, courageous spirit, and of spotless character,' like the Countess Markievicz—for whom the American Commissioners had put in a special plea—were once more kept in durance vile, in spite of the tearful clamours of the Cumann na mBan, of

¹ Debate of 11 September, 1922 (*Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 2, col. 105).

² 'Report of Conditions in Ireland, with Demand for Investigation by the Peace Conference.' Paris, 3 June 1919. Printed in *Treaty of Peace with Germany*. 66th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document No. 106.

the eloquence of female street orators, and of the stirring legends painted by night on the walls of Dublin by prowling Amazons.¹ The Irish Ministers were, indeed, in a stronger position to deal with the 'atrocities' propaganda than ever the British Government had been; for they knew it intimately from inside. Mr. Ian MacPherson's official disclaimers had not carried much weight. But when the 'wild women' raised a clamour in the gallery of the Dail about the ill-treatment of the prisoners in the gaols, Kevin O'Higgins quietly remarked, amid the laughter of the deputies: 'We know all about that. We have been in prison ourselves. We used to get up riots in order to have them suppressed, and then we got the ladies outside to write them up for propaganda purposes.'² Against such evidence as that it is difficult for the most accomplished liar to hold his own; and the Irregulars were at a stroke deprived of one of the most powerful weapons of Irish revolt, or indeed of revolt anywhere. It was, as things now stood, of minor importance that the same stroke deprived the whole Sinn Féin anti-British propaganda, which had confused the wits and warped the judgment of half the world, of any claim to credibility it had ever possessed. The only possible benefit that can now accrue from this is that the American Senate and House of Representatives, who based a whole series of impertinent anti-British resolutions on the evidence derived from this source, may feel as foolish as they look, and so learn a useful lesson for the future.

¹ A lady would hold up the policeman—a giant, but unarmed—not by the usual method, but with a revolver, while her companions hastily painted such legends as these: '55 men executed, the Republic yet lives'; 'Brave Paudeen wounds Mary Comerford'; 'The Women are hungry' [*sic*]. For a while the pillar-boxes were a complete epitome of the course of the revolution, England's cruel red having been painted over with a decent coat of green by the Free State postal authorities, while on this in turn the Republicans scrawled 'Up the Republic!' in white paint.

² The Labour leader, Cathal O'Shannon, in attacking the conduct of the National troops and police, was hampered by the same knowledge. 'We all know,' he said, 'particularly those of you who have been in prison, that a certain amount of propaganda has always been made about barracks and prisons. We all know that a good deal of that propaganda has been exaggerated; that little incidents have been exaggerated; but there is not a county in the twenty-six counties, there is not a barracks or a jail out of which has not come information which is a disgrace to any Irish Government. These things may not be true. If not true, deny them' (*Parl. Deb.*, Im. 1, Uimh. 2, 11 September 1922, col. 87).

The Provisional Government, and the Government of the Free State after it was set up, were indeed forced into measures far more severe than any that had been adopted under the British. There is no doubt that these measures were adopted with the greatest reluctance; the same was true of the British Government; there is also no doubt that they were largely justified, since—in President Cosgrave's language—the action of the Irregulars 'was a challenge not merely against particular statesmen, but against the whole ideal and principle of democratically constituted authority, which no Government could afford to ignore.'¹ It is hard, however, to defend certain of the actions of the Government, which was not as careful as the British had been to define and restrict the limits of severity beforehand by law. A great sensation, for instance, was caused by the execution on 8 December of Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellowes, and two others, avowedly in retaliation for the murder of Mr. Sean Hales, a member of the Dail, who had been shot down in the streets of Dublin on the previous day. The men executed had, it is true, surrendered at discretion, and their lives would have been legally forfeit in the first instance. But they had been greeted with effusive cordiality by their captors; they had remained for four months in prison without trial; and they were now executed at short notice as a reprisal for a crime in which they could not possibly have had any share.² There was, indeed, from the first a suspicion—however little it may have been justified—of a certain arbitrariness in the attitude of the Government with regard to executions. The first of these took place on 17 November, when four gunmen were shot, after trial by a military court, without further reason assigned. People asked themselves why certain men were singled out for the death penalty while others, equally guilty, were merely interned. There was doubtless good cause, but it was not publicly stated.

¹ New Year's Message, *Irish Times*, 1 January 1923.

² In the case of the British 'authorised reprisals' for ambushes great care was taken to burn only the houses of known sympathisers with the ambushers. The military authorities acted only after consultation with the local R.I.C., who were well acquainted with the records of all in their districts. Even thus, however, the weapon was double-edged, and mistakes were doubtless sometimes made.

The most sensational of the executions, which in a few months greatly exceeded in number those carried out by the British Government during the whole five years of the Sinn Fein revolt, was that of Erskine Childers. This enigmatic person, the brain of the Republican resistance, had been captured at the house of his cousin, Robert Barton, at Glendalough in the Wicklow Mountains. On 17 November he was tried by court martial and condemned to death; his application for a writ of *habeas corpus* was refused by the Master of the Rolls on the 23rd; and in the early morning of the 24th he was shot. Thus ended a career, the divagations of which are hard to understand. An Englishman, who in his day had served his country in arms, he had become the ally and confidant of her most bitter enemies, without, however—as he protested—sharing their hate. His acceptance of the Sinn Fein and Republican creed seems to have been, according to his own account, of the nature of a religious conversion, and he held to it with fanatical tenacity. Apparently, to judge by his record, the least consistent of men, he died in the end calmly and bravely, a martyr to consistency. The actual crime for which he was executed, however, was that of having an automatic pistol in his possession without lawful authority.¹ It was a crime of which half the boys and girls in Ireland were by this time guilty.

If the executions were intended to terrify the Irregulars into submission, they failed of their effect. On the night

¹ In the Dail, on 29 November, Mr. Kevin O'Higgins more than hinted at a curious reason for the execution of Childers in particular. He (O'Higgins) had, he said, a brother a private in the National Army in Kerry, who had been for six weeks held prisoner by Irregulars, whose commander was an Englishman. In a discussion which his brother had with that Englishman about the Treaty, the Englishman said that a great many people who were English, or half-English, had gone against the Treaty, and he also said: 'Yes, your race, and the people down through generations and centuries, have lost the knack of sticking out, and we Englishmen will never give in. We English will burn your country from end to end, will plunder your goods, and strangle your economic life, and we will never give in; and we will do it all in your behalf and in the name of Irish liberty' (*Irish Times*, 30 November, 1922). The suggestion (which was hotly resented by other deputies) was that Childers was one of those 'who came into this national struggle on the last emotional wave, who had no tradition of Irish nationality, and no conception of the grim continuity of the struggle, and the grim uprising of a submerged race.'

of the 23rd, when the fate of Childers had been decided, the Republicans in Dublin advertised the fact that their spirit was unbroken by a lively demonstration. For three hours, from 10.30 P.M. onwards, there were attacks on the barracks and other positions occupied by the Government troops, and the streets and squares of the city re-echoed with the crack of rifles and revolvers and the rattle of machine-guns. The din was terrific, but—a thing remarkable in a crowded town—nobody was hurt. This was, however, but a prelude to new acts in the tragedy of Ireland's birth as a nation. On the 29th General Mulcahy read to the Dail a document, dated 20 November, which revealed a plan for the organised destruction of the economic life of the country. It was, he said, a communication from the 'Assistant Director of Engineering, working at Field Headquarters, Northern and Eastern Command,' and was addressed to 'all Divisional Engineers.' It gave directions to make roads impassable 'at as many points as possible,' and for the destruction of railways; and these directions were declared to be 'satisfactory' by the Chief of Staff, who—'according to the latest instructions from the new Republican Cabinet'—had, together with De Valera as President, to sign all papers. How well these instructions were carried out has already been indicated. The intense seriousness of the situation was, indeed, as General Mulcahy confessed, only now beginning to be recognised. 'Executions are terrible,' said Kevin O'Higgins in answer to criticisms of the Government policy, 'but the murder of a nation is more terrible.' Yet, though he might assert that Ireland was 'not a stage for certain neurotic women and megalomaniac men to cut their capers on,' they none the less continued to occupy this stage for months to come. Enough has been said of the nature of their performance; to say more would be but vain repetition: for the deeds of violence, the rage for destruction, the bombast and the heroics remained the same. Nor, when the curtain was at last rung down, could it be said with certainty that this was upon the final scene. It was not till 23 March 1923 that De Valera announced the impossibility of continuing the unequal struggle and bade his followers dump their arms; and

this meant, not that the fires of rebellion had been extinguished, but that they had been damped down. The rebels had not surrendered, nor had their leaders submitted; they had merely disappeared, metaphorically speaking, into the bogs and forests, to lie low and wait upon opportunity. The country, though outwardly peaceful, remained in a state of war.¹

It was thus engaged, and compassed about with alarms, that the Provisional Government and Parliament set to work to discuss and pass the articles of the Free State Constitution. The general nature of the opposition to certain of these articles, notably those defining the status of the Crown, has already been indicated. For the rest, the discussions, though more protracted than those which took place later in the Imperial Parliament, were almost as otiose; for, as Ministers never ceased to point out, any vital alteration would place the whole Treaty in peril. It was, then, only with slight modifications that the Constitution as originally presented passed the Dail on 25 October. In pressing its acceptance on the House the Minister for Home Affairs enlarged on the benefits it would bring to Ireland. 'It gives the people power,' he said, 'to develop in peace towards the fulness of national life.' He believed that, 'despite superficial symptoms to the contrary, the people appreciated that fact, and that Ireland would travel along the road of peace, progress, and reconstruction.' The Labour leader, Tom Johnson, echoed this eulogy: the Constitution was a 'great achievement,' which gave the country power to control the lives and fortunes of its citizens on nine hundred and ninety-nine days out of a thousand. Finally, in closing the debate, President Cosgrave referred to the Constitution in its relation to Northern Ireland. If the country was run, he said, on the basis which he believed was desired by every member of the House, the people

¹ On 18 June 1923 the application of Countess Markievicz and other internees for writs of *habeas corpus* was refused by the High Court on the ground that the country was still in a state of war. On 1 August, however, in spite of the resistance of the Government, writs of *habeas corpus* were granted by the Lord Chief Justice in the case of two other internees on the ground that, in all the circumstances, it could not be said that a state of war existed. To meet this situation the Government pressed through the Public Safety Bill, which empowered them to keep prisoners interned at their discretion.

of Northern Ireland would be impressed by the solid work that was being done. That, he wisely remarked, would be the best way to bring them into the Free State. Indeed, it may be hazarded that it was the only way.

The fate of the Constitution, so far as legislation could make it secure, now rested with the Imperial Parliament; and in the Imperial Parliament the balance of parties had shifted. Once more the Irish question had proved fatal to the power and reputation of politicians who sought to solve it in the spirit of political opportunism. The little group of 'Die-hards,' whose protest against the surrender to violence had been greeted with derision by those who shared their views but not their honesty, had been justified more quickly than could have been expected. The Coalition Government, which had all but succeeded in bringing Parliamentary institutions themselves into contempt, crumbled and fell. On 19 October, Mr. Lloyd George resigned, and Mr. Bonar Law was summoned by the King to form a Government. The new Cabinet was purely 'Unionist,' and the general election on 15 November confirmed it in power. There was not, however, and could not be any question of reversing the Irish policy to which the nation was pledged under a solemn agreement, whatever might be said or thought as to the nature of this agreement or the methods by which it had been reached. Moreover, the new Prime Minister had expressed his approval of it, and several of his colleagues in the Cabinet had been members of the Government responsible for it. Mr. Kevin O'Higgins was justified, then, in assuring the Dail that the new British Parliament would fulfil its part of the bargain; and whatever misgivings may have been felt were dissipated by Mr. Bonar Law's announcement that he intended to uphold the Treaty.

The situation was, none the less, one of the utmost humiliation for the Imperial Parliament, which in a matter of the highest Constitutional importance was turned into a mere recording machine for registering, in principle and in detail, an arrangement made by a small group of men acting without its authority. In the circumstances, all debate was in reality superfluous, and on 28 November the Free State Constitution Bill and the Bill making the

necessary modifications in the Act of 1920 passed their second reading in the House of Commons almost without discussion. In submitting the Bills to the House, which he did 'with no special fear as to the result, but without any expression of exaggerated hope,' Mr. Bonar Law pointed out that virtually the only question for the House to decide was 'Does the Constitution comply with the Treaty?' The law officers of the Crown had reported that it did so comply, and he urged the House to accept it, since 'if a great calamity was to be avoided' the Bill must pass through all its stages by 6 December, the date on which, under the Treaty, the Constitution was to come into force.

In these circumstances it was in vain that members pointed out the inconsistent principles embodied in the Constitution and the loopholes it at least seemed to give for evading the intentions, if not the letter, of the Treaty. All objections were overruled by the Government, secure not only in an obedient majority but also in the support of the Opposition. The only precaution taken was to prefix to the schedule embodying the Free State Constitution an article (2) declaring that 'the said Constitution shall be construed with reference to the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland set forth in the Schedule hereto annexed . . . which are hereby given the force of law, and any provision of the said Constitution or of any amendment thereof, or of any law made thereunder, if in any respect repugnant to the provisions of the Scheduled Treaty, it shall, to the extent only of such repugnancy, be absolutely void and inoperative, and the Parliament and Executive Council of the Irish Free State shall respectively pass such further legislation and do all such other things as may be necessary to implement the Scheduled Treaty.' The exact value of this provision seemed problematical. In the absence of a Supreme Court, such as in the United States can nullify the acts of Congress or of the State legislatures as unconstitutional, it is not clear what authority, recognised by both Great Britain and the Free State, could pronounce acts of the Oireachtas to be or not to be *ultra vires*, or what methods—which should not raise once more the whole Irish question—could be used to compel the

Government of the Free State to 'implement the Treaty' in the event of its refusing at any time to do so.

However this may be, Parliament had no option but to pass the Bill through all its stages with somewhat undignified haste, and on 6 December it duly received the royal assent. On the same day the Provisional Government in Ireland came to an end, and that of the Free State was proclaimed. The last of the Lord-Lieutenants surrendered his uneasy office; and Mr. Timothy Healy, once the most combative of Nationalist free-lances, but popular with all classes by reason of his shrewd wit and genial manners, took over the no less uneasy duty of representing the King as the first Governor-General of the new Dominion. The remaining British troops at once prepared to evacuate the country. The Viceregal Lodge was handed over on the 14th, and on the 16th the last regiments embarked at the North Wall. They received something like an ovation from sympathetic crowds; and as the last of the troopships steamed away from the quay the band on board played 'Come Back to Erin,' which doubtless awoke sympathetic echoes in many hearts. Even the Sinn Feiners, indeed, having gained their object, had ceased to speak of the British soldiers as anything but good-natured, if amazingly simple, fellows. Some time-expired men even remained behind and, attracted by the high pay, took service in the National Army, where their knowledge of drill and capacity for maintaining discipline without harshness made them certain of at once winning their stripes.

With the establishment of the Free State, and the withdrawal of the Imperial forces, the term set for this brief history of a crowded and complicated phase in the life of Ireland has been reached. There remain, however, certain matters to be mentioned which are essential to the understanding of the situation thus created and of subsequent developments.

Under the terms of the Act establishing the Free State the Constitution was to apply to the whole of Ireland, subject, however, to the right of Northern Ireland to withdraw under Article XI of the Treaty. If there was any hope that this right would not be exercised it was rapidly belied. On the day following the signing

of the Act, 7 December, the Northern House of Commons, on the motion of Sir James Craig, decided unanimously to present the following address to the King :

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, having learnt of the passing of the Free State Constitution Act, 1922, being the Act of Parliament for the ratification of the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, do, by this humble address, pray your Majesty that the powers of the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State shall no longer extend to Northern Ireland.

On the same day an address in similar terms was adopted by the Senate on the motion of the Marquess of Londonderry.

Thus it was decided that Ireland was to remain 'partitioned.' The question of the limits of this partition was, however, still undecided. This was raised in its most dangerous form in the course of the debate in the Dail on the 6th. President Cosgrave, while evidently desirous of conciliating the North, made it clear that, if the North refused to be conciliated, the Free State would insist on its right under the Treaty to a readjustment of boundaries, which would lead to the cession to it of at least the counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh. To this Sir James Craig replied on the following day in unequivocal language. Once more he refused, on behalf of the Northern Government, to have anything to do with the proposed Boundaries Commission. This Commission, he said, was the outcome of a bargain entered into by the wrong people, and they felt no responsibility for carrying out 'a bargain which was arranged behind our backs, and must have been arranged with the full knowledge of the signatories of the Treaty that it was a breach of a most distinct pledge of Mr. Lloyd George to me personally.' There was no chance whatever, he said, of either President Cosgrave or himself giving way in the matter of the two counties ; and if they were to serve on the Commission the decision would lie with the

‘impartial’ chairman, who might be, and probably would be, a person who did not understand the Irish or Irish history. Such a decision might not only cause grave difficulties in England, but might set a match to a religious war in the Colonies; for, as he had said to Mr. Lloyd George, ‘there is not an Orange standard throughout the whole world but has Derry and Enniskillen on it.’ If the representatives of Tyrone and Fermanagh, Derry and Down, were to say in the Northern Parliament that a little in the way of the readjustment of boundaries might be done here and there, he would not stand in the way; but anything that was done must be done by arrangement between the North and South.

Thus at the very cradle of the Free State the issue between North and South was once more clearly defined. Of happier augury was the attitude of President Cosgrave towards the question of the minority in the South. The personal pledge given by Arthur Griffith during the conferences in London was not forgotten, and when the list of the President’s nominees for the first Senate of the Free State was published, it was found to contain the names of several prominent Unionists, of all complexions, carefully chosen as representatives of various interests. Even more reassuring to the non-Catholic minority, however, was the obvious determination of the new Government to avoid the least suspicion of clericalism, a determination advertised in a somewhat startling way by the fact that no prelate or minister of any denomination was either nominated or elected to the Senate. The scattered Protestants of the South were yet to suffer much; and certain of the Unionist Senators were to pay dearly, both in their property and persons, for their patriotic temerity in daring to serve their country. None the less, there dawned for Ireland a new hope. Whatever bitter popular passions continued to rage beneath the surface, with violent eruptions from time to time, the correct attitude of the Northern Government towards the Catholic minority, and that of the Southern Government towards the Protestant minority, gave promise of a time when what was noblest in the ideals of Wolfe Tone would be realised—when in Ireland there would be no longer Protestants and Catholics, but only Irishmen.

When that day comes, the problem presented by the partition will be half solved. It is not the only problem hard to solve that lies before the country. Yet, now that the worst rage of civil strife has at last subsided, it may be hoped that, under the free institutions so long desired, there may grow up in the Irish people a new sense of the value of law and order, a new capacity for sustained effort in the commonplace routine duties of life, and a more chastened patriotism—which, indeed, implies the rest. Thus in time may Ireland be healed of her grievous wounds and recover the prosperity which she ultimately enjoyed under the Union.

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
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